

**ONTOGENY RECAPITULATES SAVAGERY:
THE EVOLUTION OF G. STANLEY HALL'S ADOLESCENT**

Joshua B. Garrison

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Donald Warren, Ph.D., Chairperson

Barry Bull, Ph.D.

Doctoral Committee

B. Edward McClellan, Ph.D.

Phil Carspecken, Ph.D.

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Acknowledgements

*The marchers of the autumn Saturday brushed almost unknowingly against scattered individuals bent for the laboratory or the stacks.*¹

Historical scholarship is a solitary business, mostly conducted in the company of old books and hushed library patrons. But, thankfully, this historian's monasticism was never total—over the years I was fortunate to have had the support and friendship of many people. Without their encouragement and assistance this work would not be. And it is no small reward that, in finishing this project, I get to pay tribute to those who made it possible.

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¹ Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

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Ontogeny Recapitulates Savagery: The Evolution of G. Stanley Hall's Adolescent

In 1904 G. Stanley Hall published his seminal work *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*.

The dissertation has two primary concerns: first, it seeks to reexamine the scientific arguments found in *Adolescence*, locating their sources and demonstrating that the foundation of Hall's arguments were deeply embedded in nineteenth-century thought; second, the dissertation suggests that Hall's science, while faulty, offers a useful critique of pedagogical reform in the Progressive Era.

Chapters 1-3 investigate the scientific arguments of *Adolescence*, exploring Hall's debt to a wide range of nineteenth-century disciplines, including biology, anthropometry, sociology, anthropology, criminology, psychology, and psychiatry. The focus throughout is on Hall's use of the theories of recapitulation and evolution to ally adolescence with other groups thought to inhabit "lower" levels on the evolutionary scale: "primitives" and "savage," as well as criminals, lunatics, and sexual deviants. Chapters 4-5 look at the influence that Hall's ideas had on educational institutions, notably the child study movement and on the junior high school. In both cases, Hall's ideas were influential, but to varying degrees. It is ironic that the first institution designed to educate adolescents largely forgot about the man who helped make their efforts possible. If *Adolescence* had only limited impact on junior high school reform, then it is important for historians to examine the rift between ideas about adolescents and the implementation of practical reforms that sought to educate them. That is the primary concern in the dissertation's conclusion.

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Introduction

In 1904 G. Stanley Hall published *Adolescence: Its Psychology And Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. The book was the culmination of nearly two decades spent studying children, published twenty years after his seminal essay “The Contents of Children’s Minds Upon Entering School,” which launched the child study movement in America. *Adolescence* was a complex book and, as a result, historians have approached it in different ways. Hall’s biographer, Dorothy Ross, studied it from a psychological and biographical perspective, noting that it was a deeply personal book and that its contents were reflective of the numerous “personal conflicts” that the author experienced during his own adolescence.¹ Joseph Kett, who acknowledged the role that personal struggles played in Hall’s ideas, preferred a contextual approach and regarded Hall’s work as a product of his social and intellectual environment: *Adolescence* was “a culmination of concepts that had flourished in less systematic form for much of the 19th century.”² I have been more influenced by Kett’s contextual approach than by Ross’ biographical method, although Kett and I attack *Adolescence* from different directions. While Kett was interested in examining the book’s influence on educational and child-rearing practices, my primary interest has been on the ideas and institutions that influenced *Adolescence*—Kett moved forward from *Adolescence*, while I have traveled backwards. In both cases, however, the orientation is

¹ Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 339.

² Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 220.

contextual. Kett provided a social history, exploring Hall's impact on twentieth-century institutions and practices, while I have written an intellectual history, tracing *Adolescence* back to the nineteenth-century ideas on which it was founded.³

Adolescence, as its subtitle suggests, was a masterpiece of interdisciplinary scholarship and, sadly, it was the last book of its kind, at least in educational circles. As Michael Katz has shown, educators in the latter part of the nineteenth century began to isolate themselves from the rest of the world, becoming submerged in a professionalized ideology that was "ever more divorced from reality."⁴ Professional specialization gave educational reformers independence from other social reformers, ensuring that they would hold a monopoly on educational policy issues. At the same time, academics concerned with educational problems retreated in to departments with precisely defined boundaries and were separated from the rest of the college's academic programs. Specialization was not unique to educational scholars, of course; it grew out of the new bureaucratic structure of the modern research university, which divided knowledge into manageable units and organized disciplines along departmental lines. Educationists, like all professional academics, became isolated, separated from academia at large and engaged in intellectual pursuits that ceased to be of relevance to their colleagues across campus. Laurence Veysey has shown that universities in the 1890s were carved into collections of autonomous departments and, as a result, a new kind of institution emerged: one that "throve on the patterned isolation of its component parts, and this isolation required that people continually talk past each other, failing to listen to what

³ It should be noted that Kett's treatment of adolescence begins in the 1790s, and G. Stanley Hall only appears at the end of the book. My treatment of adolescence focuses on Hall exclusively.

⁴ Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 160.

others were actually saying.”⁵ As one contemporary noted, the compartmentalization of the academic world had dangerous consequences for the intellectual health of its professors: “The most serious evil, associated with the present tendency in education to special departments, is that the immediate uses of knowledge are allowed to take the place of its widest spiritual ministrations. The mind is made microscopic in vision and minute in method, rather than truly comprehensive and penetrating.”⁶

Hall echoed the sentiments of this traditionalist, even though he presided over one of the most “modern” universities of the day and played an important role in the development of specialized programs of graduate-level studies. There was, of course, a place for the specialized academic, and at Clark University Hall sought to create an entirely new academic specialization in child study. But, at the same time, he clung firmly to the idea that undergraduates required a broad, liberal education, an idea that was slowly going out of fashion. College study, Hall thought, should be “extensive” rather than “intensive,” students should “know something of everything, not everything about something,” and the college was “not a place for specialization.”⁷ He was also critical of the “younger generation of professors [who] are experts inspired by ideals of a highly specialized culture.”⁸ Modern research universities were grooming future professors to be experts with narrow research interests, and the new departmental structure in higher education reinforced the trend. But the trend towards specialization endangered the kind of scholarship that Hall was committed to and, in the end, one of the consequences was

⁵ Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 338.

⁶ John Bascon, quoted in *Ibid.*, 198.

⁷ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology And Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, Vol. 2* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969 [1904]), 528.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 531.

that *Adolescence* would be one of the last comprehensive educational treatises ever written.

Specialization and breadth, however, were not mutually exclusive, and the modern research university could have incorporated both into its mission. Hall was committed to focused, academic study while embracing a broad and liberal curriculum—and that dual commitment was in no way contradictory. *Adolescence* was a highly specialized treatise in that it focused on a very specific topic, but it was also a brilliant interdisciplinary undertaking informed by a sweeping command of nineteenth-century scholarship—interdisciplinary breadth was the method used by Hall in investigating clearly focused subjects. Hall researched the problem of adolescent development from every conceivable angle, and its scope was not limited by departmental or professional concerns. Hall's allegiance to one particular discipline was never total, and he moved effortlessly from one subject to the next, covering biology, anthropology, sociology, psychiatry, psychology, history, and literature along the way. His scholarly vision was expansive and his level of academic mastery impressive.

A historical understanding of both adolescence and *Adolescence* is incomplete without considering the many fields that Hall drew from. Developmental biology and evolutionary anthropology, as well as criminal anthropology, sociology, and psychiatry, all contributed to the formation of Hall's adolescent—the study of all of these subjects would improve our understanding of the history of childhood and education, but they have not yet found a place in educational historiography. One must also be sensitive to the global scale of the project—*Adolescence* relied on scholars from around the world, and built its case on the history and experiences of a number of nations and peoples.

Thus, while the general trend in educational history has been towards focused case studies, the context for much of this study is global. Such breadth, however, is rare in the history of education, where scholars have been reluctant to expand their research agendas to include broad, multidisciplinary approaches. Historians of childhood and education have been far more comfortable limiting their research agendas to the specialized concerns of their disciplines and, as a result, have ignored many sources that could have informed their work. Thus, our understanding of G. Stanley Hall remains incomplete and anecdotal. Oftentimes historians dismiss him as an eccentric mystic who was committed to a theory that contained no scientific validity and, as a result, historians of childhood and education have not fully invested themselves in examining *Adolescence* in all its complexity. In dismissing *Adolescence* as a book founded on faulty premises, or in simplifying its message to quick catch phrases such as “storm and stress,” our historical understanding of the modern adolescent has been removed from the intellectual context that gave him his form. In place of that history is one that is largely “experiential,” focusing on the lived-experiences of adolescence while ignoring other contexts of equal value. In the essays that follow, I have attempted to improve upon this historiographical shortcoming.

The method employed here does not contain a critique of experiential history; rather, it simply opts for a different approach—I have explored adolescence as the history of an idea, not as a history of an experience. Thus, the work is informed by the work of Philippe Ariès, who, as John Demos has written,

concentrated not so much on the actual life-experience of children in the past as on the prevalent attitudes *toward* and *about* these children. His work is founded on the important and incontrovertible assumption that much can be learned about

a culture by investigating the way it regards its young. In this sense, *Centuries of Childhood* is primarily about adults...⁹

The method has considerable value: “Attitudes towards childhood become, then, a kind of yardstick for measuring historical trends of the most profound consequence.”¹⁰

Barbara Finkelstein is somewhat critical of the “intellectualist” approach, which “emphasizes the power of the written and spoken work, rather than the force of material circumstances.” According to Finkelstein, “intellectualist” historians

treat children instrumentally—as a concern of social philosophers, political theorists, and educators, a focus for philosophical debate, ideological controversy, and educational speculation. As passive recipients of ideas, sensibilities and skills, children in the hands of these historians, become mere reflections in the movement of ideas.¹¹

Finkelstein is critical of the method and considers it to be “limited.” And, in some senses, it is. As Harvey Graff has shown, adolescents in the early twentieth century were not always passive creatures, but were frequently the agents of their own destiny. But, at the same time, young people, then and now, have been treated instrumentally, and not only by historians: young people have been subject to rules and guidelines set by adults; they have been housed in institutions invented by adults that serve adult interests; and their realities have been constructed by adults who control society’s discursive apparatuses and produce the very categories that define childhood in its different stages. Children always reflect the adult world, in some way or another—so, what is to be found in the adolescent’s reflection?

⁹ John Demos, “Developmental Perspectives on the History of Childhood,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (No. 2, 1971), 315.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹¹ Barbara Finkelstein, “Literature Review: Incorporating Children into the History of Education,” *The Journal of Educational Thought* 18 (April 1984), 29.

Overview:

Chapter One explores the scientific foundations on which *Adolescence* was built. Hall's developmental theory was greatly influenced by nineteenth-century advances in the field of biology, and particularly important were the theories of recapitulation and evolution, worked out by Ernst Haeckel, Charles Darwin, and others. Other sciences proved instrumental to Hall's work as well, including primatology, physical anthropology, comparative anatomy, and anthropometry. Combined, these disciplines provided scholars with the tools needed to construct a complete genealogical record of the human tribe, tracing the development of mankind from its meager beginnings to its present form. Hall's unique contribution to the project lay in demonstrating the ways that adolescence—as a distinct stage of life—contributed to a historical understanding of human development. In doing so, however, he necessarily conceived of adolescents as representing man's earliest ancestors, be they entirely theoretical recapitulations of “missing links,” or accurate physiological approximations of “savage” forms. The problems that arise from allying adolescents with these other groups are explored throughout.

Chapter Two highlights the contributions made by recapitulatory thinking to the field of anthropology, examining Hall's use of nineteenth-century anthropology in his theory of adolescent development. While biological recapitulation likened adolescents to savages by virtue of their perceived physiological similarities, social recapitulation found moral, intellectual, and social parallels. In effect, both children and primitives were converted to the other, a conclusion that had dramatic implications for both colonial policies and educational practices in the West. The creation of a linear developmental

scheme based on the evolutionary history allowed recapitulationists to devise a normative developmental map for adolescents, where the period of puberty became the most critical stage of development because it marked the point at which civilization diverged from savagery.

Failure to properly transition from one recapitulatory epoch to the next is the theme of Chapter Three, which explores the fate of those who were thought to have remained trapped in earlier stages. Hall regarded abnormal development as an evolutionary problem, with abnormal types such as criminals, lunatics, and sexual deviants retaining adolescent characteristics into adulthood, thereby occupying a permanent stage of savagery, primitiveness, or childhood. The argument was a powerful one: if all abnormal behavior had historical antecedents rooted in primitive life, then members of those “lower” groups were necessarily deviant; at the same time, in allying young people with such notions of deviance, they too would be perceived of as essentially deviant.

Chapter Four examines how Hall’s ideas were spread throughout the entire educational community through the child study movement and its journal, *The Pedagogical Seminary*. Hall’s developmentalism and his particular strand of recapitulatory thinking became extremely popular in the late nineteenth century thanks to an effective institutional strategy that promoted and disseminated his ideas. Thus, the theories later found in *Adolescence* were by no means unfamiliar to teachers, teacher educators, and school administrators; in fact, they were commonly accepted among the day’s educators. At its height, the child study movement proved to be a powerful and

influential movement, with the ideas of recapitulation occupying a central role in its message.

The legacy was short-lived, however. Chapter Five explores the history of the first major educational reform movement directed toward adolescents: the junior high school. Gaining momentum a decade after *Adolescence* was published, the junior high school movement attempted to transform every aspect of the middle grades, providing adolescents with an educational experience that was tailored to their distinct developmental needs. At times the rhetoric of the reformers sounded very Hallian but, in fact, the substance of Hall's work was lacking. Indeed, many of the reforms implemented in junior high schools ran counter to Hall's recommendations. Both child study and recapitulation had ceased to appeal to educational reformers, leaving Hall's ideas to posterity. The direct influence of G. Stanley Hall did not last into the twentieth century, a reason, I suspect, that historians of education have lately stopped studying his work. But that is not to say that the indirect influence of *Adolescence* was insignificant. A primary aim of this dissertation, and a suggestion for further research, is to attempt to excavate the lasting influence that Hall had on educational practices and on contemporary ideas about childhood.

Chapter One

Locating Adolescence on the Map of Humanity

Every living creature commences its existence under a form different from, and simpler than, that which it eventually attains.

Thomas H. Huxley (1863)¹

The bodily structure of man shows traces more or less plain, of his descent from some lower form.

Charles Darwin (1871)²

We know that the innumerable varieties of animals and plants which during the course of millions of years have peopled our planet are all simply branches of one single genealogical tree; we know that the human race itself forms only one of the newest, highest, and most perfect offshoots from the race of the Vertebrates.

Ernst Haeckel (1892)³

I. The Rise of Developmentalism and the History of Man

During G. Stanley Hall's graduate studies in Leipzig he was given the assignment of conducting a detailed study of the muscles of a frog's leg. Initially, he found the task an unappealing one, feeling "at first a strong sense of repugnance from so small and mean a theme," and the scientific contributions resulting from his study were, admittedly, "infinitesimal."⁴ But years later, reflecting upon this episode, he shared with his readers a great lesson he took from that frog's leg: I learned, wrote Hall, "that any object, however unattractive, may be a key to the greatest themes." After all, "the structure and laws of

¹ Thomas H. Huxley, *Man's Place in Nature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961 [1863]), 74.

² Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004 [1879]), 22.

³ Ernst Haeckel, *Monism as Connecting Religion and Science: The Confession of Faith of A Man of Science* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1895), 32.

⁴ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology And Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, Vol. I* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969 [1904]), 130-131.

action and muscles were the same in frogs as in men, that such contractile tissue was the only organ of the will and had done all man's work in the world, made civilization, character, history, states, books, and words."⁵ The leap from frogs' legs to modern history was not farfetched for a man whose view of the universe was precise and linear—if evolutionary progress connected all things, as Hall believed, then the lineage of each could be traced backwards or forwards, from the dawn of time to the bustling complexities of modern civilization. The world, for Hall, was "lawful to the core," and the law of evolution superseded all others. Those Leipzig meditations contributed to a realization that all things were interconnected and related, a belief that the cosmos was ordered and unified, and a conviction that great things grew out of simple ones. Later, Hall's work on adolescence would seek verification of those postulates, but in a more systematic and thorough way—adolescence would be for Hall the greatest of all themes.

Important as frog legs proved to be, there was, of course, a more appropriate starting point for an exploration of the evolutionary history of humankind and *Adolescence* began with the *very* beginning: "the age of zero for all sexed animals...when the male cell penetrates the ovum."⁶ It was not uncommon for nineteenth-century thinkers to build social or psychological theories from generalizations derived from biology, which commonly served as the foundation for many of the developmentalist disciplines. Natural laws operating within the biological realm offered the human scientist formulae that helped to explain the growth, development, and evolution of human phenomena. Groundbreaking biological research, in cellular biology and embryology in particular, provided useful theories and methods for scholars who sought

⁵ Ibid., 130.

⁶ Ibid., 1.

to order the stages of human development. Nineteenth-century scientific research was often devoted to the formation of developmental laws; as scholars worked to explain the evolution of humanity from the simplest states to those of greatest complexity, they turned to biology, the science that had made the most progress in that regard. Hall's use of these "hard" sciences in the formation of his psychological treatment of adolescents, then, would hardly have been regarded as irregular. The precedent had certainly been set, by Herbert Spencer and others, who drew from biology a framework from which humanity could be studied.

Embryology proved to be a particularly useful science for the developmentally minded scholar and by the time Hall reached Leipzig great strides had been made in the field. During the previous century "almost all students of biology and medicine" were preformationists, believing that embryos contained fully developed, though tiny, beings.⁷ But in the face of scientific advancement, students of embryology in the nineteenth century had rid themselves of this fantastic claim and along with it visions of tiny homunculi curled up inside of eggs. Performanceism had suited a world which thought the universe static, where life did not evolve but simply grew according to a foreordained plan of divine will. Growth had been the guiding problem of the eighteenth-century laboratory, central to the field of embryology, and the focus of all the biological sciences.⁸ The scientist who observed a microscopic stallion swirling about in a sample of horse semen was not thought crazy by his colleagues, but as successfully (and

⁷ Joseph Needham, *A History of Embryology* (New York: Abelard-Schurman, 1959), 222; Wrote Albrecht von Haller: "It follows that the ovary of an ancestress will contain not only her daughter but also her granddaughter, her greatgranddaughter and her greatgreatgranddaughter, and if it is once proved that an ovary can contain many generations, there is no absurdity in saying that it contains them all." Quoted in Needham, p. 222.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 207.

empirically) having illustrated the principle of growth-as-unfoldment to which most respectable scientists adhered. The developmental question, central to biological studies during Hall's time, would have been alien to the preformationist, who wondered only how such a tiny horse grew into a life-sized one, not how a mass of unvariegated cells transformed into an animal. The term evolution itself, Stephen Jay Gould reminds us, was used during this period to denote "an unrolling of parts already existing in compact form."⁹ Only in the nineteenth century would development replace growth as the force that most biologists thought drove all life and accompanying this change in thinking were radical shifts not only in embryology and the other biological sciences, but also in popular perceptions of self, society, and world. In the end, evolutionary thought left little untouched and men like Herbert Spencer and his American disciple John Fiske created complex meta-philosophies that positioned evolution as the universal force behind all things. From this tradition G. Stanley Hall's conception of adolescence emerged.

These two antithetical biological positions—evolutionary development versus preformed unfolding—could not but influence the ways in which adults conceived of children. Present day controversies aside, the fertilized egg clearly marks the earliest stage of child-life and, arguably, embryological science should constitute the first chapter in the history of childhood. Scientific conceptions of embryonic life affect not just the science of prenatal life, but extend to the larger realm of child-life itself. A preformed person originally encased in an embryo merely *grew in stature*, but an undifferentiated collection of cells *developed in structure* into something entirely new. These different conceptions applied more generally to childhood itself. Educational methods, for

⁹ Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 29; See also Peter J. Bowler, "The Changing Meaning of Evolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (January-March 1975): 95-114.

instance, are dramatically altered when the philosophy of child-rearing shifts from growing an adult to developing a child. Thus the roots of Hall's genetic science of adolescence extended all the way down to the undeveloped embryo because it was within in the embryo that the developmental thesis found its greatest strength; attempts to explain changing attitudes toward youth at the dawn of the twentieth century must take into consideration the full spectrum of nineteenth-century sciences that influenced Hall's milieu, no matter how distant they may seem at first glance.

Historian of childhood Philippe Ariès understood this point and was himself interested in how "ideas which were scientific at the time...corresponded to a popular and commonplace idea of life." Of particular interest to Ariès were the points of correspondence between science and childhood, how the former shaped views of the latter.¹⁰ Though he did not investigate biological (or embryological) ideas of the medieval period, such an inquiry would likely have revealed congruities between the forces thought to fuel biological change and popular assumptions about the transition from childhood to adulthood. Ariès' claim that the medieval mind did not recognize age as an important social determinant might be bolstered by a demonstration that preformationism was a commonly accepted belief; the preformationist would envision the child as a miniature adult and nothing more and age categories would not be particularly important. Likewise, the discovery of the human egg as a dynamic entity would generate discussion that extended beyond the laboratory and deep into the popular discourse, not only affecting conceptions about children (and assisting in creating new categories of children

¹⁰ Philippe Ariès. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 23.

altogether), but also having an impact on the most far reaching questions concerning humankind.

In the end, preformationism could not survive and advances in microscopic technology showed the idea to be wholly lacking in reality. Caspar Friedrich Wolff's discovery in 1759 (though not widely publicized in the scientific community until 1812) of the developmental changes in the intestinal structure of chicken embryos delivered a "death blow" to the theory.¹¹ Soon biologists began to examine species as they *changed* over time, eschewing the earlier belief that organisms simply unfolded. Important contributions included Karl Ernst von Baer's important discovery that cellular layers developed specialized organic functions, such as respiration and digestion; Lamarck's idea that practice and habit modified an animal's hereditary legacy; and, later, Darwin's work on natural selection: all signaled an unequivocal break from eighteenth-century thought and toward a new view of nature that was, above all else, dynamic. Of this broad shift, historian of science William Coleman writes:

Bare reference to the timeless quality of God's well-ordered, machinelike unity seemed increasingly an inadequate explanation of this dynamic entity, Nature. Rather, one must learn how change occurs and believe that phenomena present a constant affirmation of the essentiality of change in our world.¹²

The discovery of a dynamic embryo not only reopened biological discussions, but also initiated new conversations among psychologists, social scientists, and even pedagogues. If the embryo, the basal unit of life, was not a static entity, but an object that changed radically in structure and form, then what consequences might this have for the other

¹¹ Ernst Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man: A Popular Exposition of the Principal Points of Human Ontogeny and Phylogeny, Volume One* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1879), 40. Also, in terms of the animalculists position, many could simply not stomach the theological implications of a God who sent millions upon millions of sperm-homunculi to their deaths with each act of coitus.

¹² William Coleman, *Biology in the Nineteenth Century: Problems of Form, Function, and Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977 [1971]), 10.

sciences? The new findings of cellular development suggested the existence of new laws that might be applicable to the rest of the natural world and, consequently, quite often embryology would serve as the starting point for other sciences that sought to explain change through development. One such project, G. Stanley Hall's *Adolescence*, employed developmental embryology to set the basic parameters for his own theory—and Hall's method was fully in step with the thinkers who influenced him most, the German biologist Ernst Haeckel included.

The cells of the embryo resembled for Haeckel a “social, civil community, the numerous single individuals of which are, indeed developed in various ways, but were originally only simple cells of one common structure.”¹³ Herbert Spencer found in those cells a developmental process analogous with the growth of modern society at large. For Haeckel and Spencer, biology and society operated on the same general principles and organic and evolutionary metaphors pepper their writings. John Fiske, the great American disciple of Spencer, held evolution to be the first “generalization” of a cosmic philosophy in which the phenomena of organic life and society operated in unison: here the law of organic evolution was synonymous with the law of social evolution.¹⁴ Nineteenth century evolutionary theories transitioned comfortably between biological development and social evolution—the emergence of specialized and differentiated structures from a simple cell seemed to model the growth of simple societies into complex ones. That biological and social evolution followed the same general principles of development was only natural in a universe governed by laws.

¹³ Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man*, 147.

¹⁴ John Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy, Based on the Doctrine of Evolution, Volume II* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1874), 209-212.

Developmentalism thus provided new explanations for biological and social change, importing into social science the biologist's discovery that complex forms emerged from simple ones. But it also was applied to explanations of *individual* change. Developmentalism reoriented the individual's relationship with the social world in dramatic ways; sciences that sought to explain the development of individuals, such as psychology, appropriated the same laws thought to govern both the natural and social worlds—certainly individuals were not immune from the laws that governed the rest of the universe. Ontogeny and phylogeny, the individual and the whole, respectively, were thus seen to follow the same rules—in light of these discoveries, studies of individual growth and behavior were reoriented in relation to the whole.

More dramatic still was the assertion that ontogeny and phylogeny shared not only the same laws, but the same history as well. The idea that ontogeny recapitulated phylogeny, that the history of the whole species determined the developmental course of its individual members, became in the latter part of the nineteenth century “the standard technique for the reconstruction of evolution.”¹⁵ Hall's theory of social and cultural recapitulation, in which the individual's life history corresponded to that of the race's, is well known. But it is important to realize that Hall's recapitulatory theory was derived from, and dependent on, Haeckel's—indeed, Hall's work can be seen as the continuation of Haeckel's. Though most of *Adolescence* focuses on the social and psychological sides of recapitulation, Hall used Haeckel's theory of biological recapitulation as the starting point for his own work: “In this process the individual in a general way repeats the history of its species, passing slowly from the protozoan to the metazoan stage, so that we

¹⁵ Peter J. Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti-Darwinian Theories in the Decades around 1900* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992 [1983]), 36.

have all traversed in our own bodies ameboid, helminthoid, piscian, amphibian, anthropoid, ethnoid, and we know not how many intercalary stages of ascent.”¹⁶ In fine, the individual, from embryo on up, reenacted the evolutionary history of the entire animal kingdom.

On this subject, Hall’s debt to Ernst Haeckel cannot be overestimated, for without Haeckel’s work on the biogenic law, the version of the theory of social recapitulation that appeared in *Adolescence* would have lacked much, if not all, of its scientific basis. Hall relied heavily on the man who credited himself as being the first to apply the recapitulatory theory to humans. As “early as 1866” in his influential work *General Morphology*, Haeckel discovered that the “intimate causal connection between ontogeny and phylogeny, between the development of the individual and the history of its ancestors, enables us to gain a safe and certain knowledge of our ancestral series.”¹⁷ Haeckel’s work followed the organic analogy outlined by Spencer, but took it further. Spencer had reminded his readers in *The Principles of Sociology* that analogies between social experience and biological form were merely suggestive—a kind of “scaffolding” according to which sociological ideas were formulated, ideas that stood once the scaffolding was removed.¹⁸ Spencer might have made analogies between protoplasm and wandering bands of savages, but those were illustrative, demonstrating the general tendencies common to all forms of life.¹⁹ Comparisons of social life with biological phenomena were meant to underscore the commonly held belief that natural laws

¹⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 2.

¹⁷ Ernst Haeckel, *The Last Link: Our Present Knowledge of the Descent of Man* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1898), 5.

¹⁸ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, Vol. 1, 580-581.

¹⁹ In this case the analogy was meant to demonstrate that the growing complexity of societies (cellular organisms) required the mutual interdependence of various parts (cellular layers). *Ibid.*, 473-474.

governed life, and here Spencer's comparisons were strictly metaphorical. But Haeckel did find an exact correspondence between biological form and the organization of species. As he moved backwards—to the pre-social—he arrived at a purely biological epoch where individual and whole were one, a point in organic history when the entire social and biological realm developed from as a simple unitary entity.

Beginning with observations of embryonic cells, Haeckel noted that those belonging to animals and people could not be distinguished—initially all animal life was identical. From this he postulated the existence of a “foundational organism,” or primary ancestor. Best approximated by the amoeboid form, this primitive structure marked the genesis of human history, and for Haeckel it became the basis for knowing mankind.²⁰ As he drew from the revolutionary work of German biologists Caspar Friedrich Wolff and Karl Ernst Baer, as well as Lamarck and Darwin, Haeckel laid waste to the notion that each species possessed separate and constant histories, an idea held onto stubbornly by Louis Aggasiz, the last important advocate of the doctrine of constancy of species, whose racist proclivities made the polygenetic theory seem absurd and offensive. The unification of man and animal through embryological investigation fused what had formerly been conceived as separately unfolding biological histories into one vast narrative—Haeckel sought nothing less than to construct a “monophyletic genealogy of the animal kingdom.”²¹ Charles Darwin, whose thoughts on man's earliest genealogical periods were influenced by Haeckel, also worked from the findings of this brand of

²⁰ Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man*, Vol. 1, 137-146.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 247.

embryology: “Man is developed from an ovule, about 125th of an inch in diameter, which differs in no respect from the ovules of other animals.”²²

As we shall see in Chapter Two, this trend in biological thought allowed those in the human sciences—particularly anthropologists—to create monophyletic genealogies of their own. The cultural histories of humanity written by Victorian anthropologists, and the genetic explanations of man’s psychological development created by Hall and others, can be understood only as a *continuation* of Haeckel’s monophyletic vision.

This alliance of the biological and human sciences gained prominence in the second half of the nineteenth century and was shaped by efforts to order the species in genealogical tables; biologists who began to unite primitive forms of life through the detection of shared ancestries helped pave the way for developmentalism’s controversial application to the anthropological realm. But what made Haeckel’s brand of biological thinking especially influential was that he saw his work as a historical undertaking as much as a scientific one: “I am one of those scientists who believe in a real ‘natural history,’ and who think as much of an historical knowledge of the past as of an exact investigation of the present.”²³ Haeckel’s goal was to understand the history of human development by reading a biological record spanning millions of years. The embryos and fetuses he observed in the laboratory were treated like specimens uncovered in the geological record. But if the paleontologist and archaeologist caught glimpses of history captured by chance geological events, the recapitulationist had discovered that life’s historical formula was buried in the living record itself. The theory of recapitulation resuscitated all the actors of biological history, allowing recapitulationists to witness

²² Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 25.

²³ Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man*, Vol. 2.

history as it unfolded within current life forms. In these annals, mankind was placed at the center of all investigation: “The problem which underlies all others, is as to the place which man occupies in nature and his relations to the universe of things.”²⁴

Developmental thinking is necessarily historical, as its primary concern lies in tracing past forms/states to current ones and biological change when explained by gradual evolutionary transitions always contains a historical narrative. Whether the mechanism driving biological modification is Lamarckian habituation, Darwinian selection, or Haeckelian recapitulation, the transformation of the species is explained as modification occurring over vast periods of time. But while historicism is necessary, anthropomorphism may not be—it certainly reminds one of the Whiggishness that modern historians so frequently bemoan. But this element of presentism—seeing the seeds of man in all things—made Haeckel’s work particularly amenable to Hall’s genetic program, which saw in all primitive peoples the kernel of modern man. Many biologists, lamented Haeckel, were concerned only with ontogenetic development—the “history of the germ,” or type; but Haeckel was interested in phylogeny, the “history of the tribe” and, specifically, the human tribe.²⁵ Hall would have held anthropologists and sociologists who studied small groups without fitting them somewhere upon the chronology of human progress in equal disfavor, though most nineteenth-century social scientists were unlikely to study specific populations without recognizing their significance in the larger story of human civilization. For both Haeckel and Hall, types were seen always in relation to the whole; in a narrative of historical development so oriented, everything was measured by its relation and proximity to the highest

²⁴ Haeckel, *The Last Link*, 4.

²⁵ Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man*, 6.

manifestation of life or culture. For Haeckel the fish was of interest because humans inherited much from the piscine form: double nasal structure, jaws, lungs, and pairs of limbs.²⁶ For Hall the frog's leg was significant because it provided clues to human development. Nothing stood on its own and all sciences were united in an effort to answer the same question.

In the laboratory Haeckel observed the “facts” of ontogeny and derived from those their “phylogenetic significance”—structural modifications in any given species were important in terms of their influence on future forms.²⁷ It was not always a precise science and Haeckel noted that the phylogenetic hypothesis did not necessarily lead to scientific certitude.²⁸ The study of ontogeny rested on definite and observable morphological structures of the individual, but phylogeny was far less positivistic; Haeckel himself defined it as “the developmental history of the abstract, genealogical individual.”²⁹ Thus phylogeny was more theoretical position than empirical observation, at least as Haeckel saw it, and while many scientists were confident that the general theory of descent had been proven beyond reproach, it was far more difficult to establish with certainty the entire ancestral line of a species. Millennia of change, sometimes cataclysmic, other times gradual, had not been kind to many species and, as Darwin and Lyell well knew, much of the phylogenetic record had disappeared. Over time, the driving force of evolution had replaced inferior beings with superior ones; extinction was as much a part of evolution as development. As Darwin noted in *Origin*: “Natural

²⁶ Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man*, Vol. 2, 109.

²⁷ Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man*, Vol. 1, 150.

²⁸ Indeed, Haeckel called for a distinction between the “*absolute* certainty of the general (inductive) theory of descent, and the *relative* uncertainty of the special (deductive) hypothesis of descent.” See *The Evolution of Man*, Vol. 2, 35.

²⁹ Haeckel quoted in Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 80.

Selection almost inevitably causes much Extinction of the less improved forms of life.”³⁰

Explaining the process further, he noted:

But we may go further than this; for as new forms are continually and slowly being produced, unless we believe that the number of specific forms goes on perpetually and almost indefinitely increasing, numbers inevitably must become extinct. That the number of specific forms has not indefinitely increased, geology shows us plainly; and indeed we can see reason why they should not have thus increased, for the number of places in the polity of nature is not indefinitely great...³¹

Since the *actual* ancestors from past epochs were not still living, sometimes the best the biological recapitulationist could do was to locate approximations (living or dead) where direct evidence was not extant. The creation of theoretical ancestors was an attempt to piece together a line extending from simple cellular organisms all the way to humans—deductions derived from actual observation of what the ancestors *might have been like*. The manufacturing of theoretical ancestors was an attempt to continue Darwin’s project, which had stopped at the limits of what evidence was available to him. “I am fully convinced that species are not immutable,” Darwin wrote, “but that those belonging to what are called the same genera are lineal descendants of some other and generally extinct species.”³²

In order to fill in the gaps of his own laboratory work, Haeckel turned to comparative anatomy, the branch of morphological investigation that sought to uncover internal similarities shared by diverse members of the animal kingdom, once thought to be unrelated by virtue of their obvious external dissimilarities. Comparative anatomy turned inward, to the examination of internal structures, and Haeckel used the field to

³⁰ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle For Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999 [1859]), 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

³² *Ibid.*, 7.

find morphological similarities between primitive animals and human embryos. Wrote Haeckel, “it is important that we find a large number of lower animal forms to be still represented in the course of man’s embryonic development. In these cases we may draw our conclusions with the utmost security as to the nature of the ancestral form from the features of the form which the embryo momentarily assumes.”³³

When certain stages of human growth within the embryo were structurally analogous with other life forms, Haeckel assumed that the comparative sample was a distant relative of man. The earlier that a similarity was observed in the embryo’s development, the more ancient the relation, and through this method Haeckel began to piece together a complete genealogical table of humanity’s shared ancestry. Haeckel’s gastrula theory was comparative anatomy in action. Called his “most famous invention” by Stephen Jay Gould, the gastrula “was the hard salesman of recapitulation,” but, as Gould also reminds us, it was highly problematic.³⁴ The gastrula was an imaginary creature, a theoretical animal cobbled together from the observations of scores of other animals. Basically a floating sac, the gastrula was a primitive intestinal animal with two layers and a cavity for intake—it represented for Haeckel the common progenitor shared by all complex animals, marking the evolutionary moment when the protozoa and metazoa diverged. From that divergence Haeckel’s evolutionary tree began to take shape and from the gastrula Haeckel painstakingly reconstructed the emergence of vertebrate forms, leading eventually to a “historical succession of the classes and orders of the Vertebrata in the course of untold millions of years,” which was “much more important for the foundation of our human pedigree than would be a complete series of all possible

³³ Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man*, Vol. 1.

³⁴ Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 102.

skeletons of Primate.”³⁵ The members of this genealogy, from the gastrula to the “skull-less, brainless, and memberless” amphioxus, a kind of primitive worm, earned from Haeckel the kind of filial deference that might have been reserved for his most direct ancestors. Those creatures, he wrote, “deserve all respect as being of our own flesh and blood [and have] better right to be an object of profound admiration and of devoutest reverence, than any one in that worthless rabble of so-called ‘saints’ in whose honour we ‘civilized and enlightened’ cultured nations erect temples and decree procession.”³⁶ Later, anthropologists and genetic psychologists would wrap such garlands around the neck of other mythological beings that filled historical gaps in the procession of human history.

Haeckel’s theoretical ancestral lineage, the “succession of unbroken forms” leading from the single-celled amoeba to the complex vertebrate, had evolved over “thousands of millions of years” and offered a much more accurate evolutionary record than paleontology could ever hope to provide.³⁷ If the theory of recapitulation was correct, then the entire story of humanity’s organic development, from the gastrula on up, was preserved within the embryo’s internal record, thereby supplementing the lack of direct evidence in the geological record. It worked in theory, but posed another methodological problem for scientists who sought to chart this great span of organic history: this was a history compressed into forty weeks of embryonic growth in humans, a blink of an eye and the observer might miss a crucial evolutionary step. “The brief period in which the Ontogeny of the human individual takes place,” Haeckel wrote, “bears no proportion to the infinitely long period required for the phylogenesis of the

³⁵ Haeckel, *Evolution of Man*, Vol. 1, 107-109; 232-23; 41.

³⁶ Ibid., 474.

³⁷ Ibid., 7; Haeckel, *Evolution of Man*, Vol. 2, 3.

human tribe.”³⁸ It was a history that progressed so rapidly that major shifts could be almost imperceptible. This was especially true for humans; G. Stanley Hall wrote that the “early stages of growth are telescoped into each other almost indistinguishably, so that phylogenetically the embryo lives a thousand years in a day, and the higher the species the more rapid relatively is the transit through the lower stages.”³⁹ From fertilization to birth, the weight of the developing human increased 950,600,000 times; the embryo experienced an overwhelming amount of morphological change *in utero*. And more problematically, as species advanced in evolutionary complexity, previous stages in the species’ biological past became more and more abbreviated, if not entirely vitiated. The gestation period could not be expected to expand indefinitely in order to “fit” in the forever increasing number of evolutionary steps higher organisms inherited from lower ones.⁴⁰ This problem of kenogenesis—in which “new features are added to the end of ontogeny [and] condensation makes room for them by deleting earlier stages”⁴¹—troubled both Hall and Haeckel, who had to mine other disciplines for data to support the idea that ontogeny did indeed recapitulate phylogeny.

Investigations of the earliest stages of man’s biological history, then, were fraught with problems. Darwin hadn’t the stomach for such researches, noting with frustration that in “attempting to trace the genealogy of the Mammalia, and therefore of man, lower down in the series, we become involved in greater and greater obscurity.”⁴² Fortunately, for recapitulationists, the further scientists moved along in the annals of organic history,

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Hall, *Adolescence Vol. I*, 3.

⁴⁰ Hall and other developmentalists who focused on children solved this problem: the child finished the recapitulatory process in his infancy.

⁴¹ Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 85.

⁴² Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 185.

the fewer ancestors humans actually had—as evolutionary lines became more distant from their common origins, humans and their closer relatives branched off into increasingly elite segments of the animal kingdom. Consequently, the “tribal record” grew more “trustworthy” with the aid of sciences that explored human history beyond the kinds of speculative embryological forms invented by Haeckel. Several disciplines contributed to this reconstruction of biological history, most importantly comparative anatomy, paleontology, and primatology. Taken individually, each science offered only pieces of historical evidence concerning the evolution of the human form, but combined they provided for a more a complete genealogy. This alliance of historically-oriented, developmental sciences helped evolutionists move beyond the limits of any particular body of evidence and toward a true monophyletic history of the human species.

Phylogenic reconstruction as an interdisciplinary undertaking, pulling from a diverse range of sciences to delineate an ascending scale of organic life, would become the model for recapitulationists in the human sciences. Where biological recapitulation ended, with a complete explanation of man’s organic history, social recapitulation began; the latter followed the same method in its attempt to unravel man’s social, cultural, and intellectual heritage. G. Stanley Hall and others took their cue from biological recapitulation, gleaning from it both its method and purpose, and this application allowed them to continue the story of human progress where biology necessarily ended. Combined, the biological and human sciences would order life from its simple cellular beginnings all the way to the most advanced stages of civilization and culture. Never had a historical project been so ambitious.

Herbert Spencer, whose influence on developmentally-minded scholars was immense, knew that such an ambitious project could not succeed without interdisciplinary cooperation. Through his own work, he hoped to inspire interdisciplinary alliances where questions concerning the origins of man could be answered collaboratively. According to Spencer, all sciences were, in essence, evolutionary and should assist one another in working toward the same end:

Theoretically, all the concrete sciences are adjoining tracts of one science, which has for its subject-matter, the continuous transformation which the Universe undergoes. Practically, however, they are distinguishable as successively more specialized parts of the total science—parts further specialized by the introduction of additional factors.⁴³

While disciplinary specialization grappled with specific and sometimes esoteric questions that were sometimes of little relevance to the equally particularized inquiries of other fields, Spencer's notion that separate fields shared common ground suggested the need for broad scholarship that took into consideration the findings of *all* sciences in an attempt to construct a complete history of humankind. For thinkers sympathetic to this project, as both Haeckel and Hall were, disciplinary integration won out over academic specialization. Important as the individual contributions of morphology, embryology, anatomy, paleontology, and primatology may have been, without synthesis their findings lacked the splendor that Spencer and others were searching for. Darwin understood this too—and the wide variety of disciplines he drew upon in his *Descent of Man* shows him to be in step with this kind of meta-theoretical thinking: referenced in *Descent* are Max Mueller's linguistic theories, the anthropological work of Lubbock, McLellan, Tylor, and Quatrefages, essays on craniology and ethics, as well as an impressive variety of books

⁴³ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology, Volume I* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897 [1855, 1870, 1880]), 136.

on embryology, primatology, and even abnormal psychology. Original and highly specialized research produced indispensable building blocks, but a Spencerian science of man required scholars who could assemble their work into complete metatheories.

Haeckel summarized the point nicely in *Monism*: “The whole literature of modern biology, the whole of our present zoology and botany, morphology and physiology, anthropology and psychology, are pervaded and fertilised by the theory of descent.”⁴⁴

As the nineteenth century came to a close, Haeckel’s monophyletic vision was in jeopardy, at least it in the biological sciences where it was clearly losing ground. (At the same moment, however, it was gaining momentum in the human sciences.) Within Haeckel’s field there was

a growing dissatisfaction, shared by many descriptive embryologists, with facile explanations of phylogenetic relatedness based on homologous structures...[and a] tendency of these same investigators to eschew the use of wholesale speculations to relate phyletic groups that characterized many earlier descriptive studies...[and] the result was a restriction of homological considerations to closely related forms.⁴⁵

This may have constituted an advance in science, but it clearly distanced the study of embryology from Spencer’s program. As embryologists in the 1890s became more specialized, they ceased to place a premium on contributing to human history as a whole and began to focus “primarily on ontogenetic events at the expense of phylogenetic issues.”⁴⁶ In Gould’s words, research turned toward detailed inquiry on the specific and away from the once “spectacular persistence of complete and remote ancestors in the early ontogeny of higher forms.”⁴⁷ The point here is not whether Haeckel’s theory was

⁴⁴ Haeckel, *Monism*, 39.

⁴⁵ Keith R. Benson, “Problems of Individual Development: Descriptive Embryological Morphology in American at the Turn of the Century,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 14 (Spring 1981), 120.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 127-8.

⁴⁷ Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 102.

correct, though time and the development of observational technologies showed it to be as ludicrous as preformationism; rather, the importance of Haeckel's work is the impact it had on other sciences. Regardless of its diminishing influence in embryological and morphological circles, grand phylogenetic claims—complete with a fictive cast and audacious aims—gained ground elsewhere. Haeckel's theory and method would continue to influence the writing of man's history, even as his biological colleagues were rejecting them. But G. Stanley Hall never wavered in his faith, giving the impression in *Adolescence* that Haeckel was alive and well in 1904.

II. Apes, Children, and Savages: Biological Recapitulation in Primatology and Physical Anthropology

The problem of missing intermediary forms also pestered the paleontologist, another scientist whose findings contributed to a “totalitizing science.” Charles Lyell, the great geologist whose influence was widely felt in evolutionary circles, and of great import to the work of Darwin, recognized that the geological record was imperfect and worried that its gaps might betray his gradualist thesis. Some, complained the man who introduced gradualism to the world, interpreted breaks in the paleontological record as “proofs of original chasms and leaps in the course of nature,” but this was an incorrect conclusion. While Biblical literalists found in history cataclysmic events that altered the course of natural history with an immediate and dramatic intensity, Lyell saw history as a more slowly paced affair.⁴⁸ So slowly and over such a long period of time, in fact, that it troubled the imagination. “These and similar facts,” commented John Lubbock on the

⁴⁸ Charles Lyell, *The Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1863), 406.

matter, “though they afford us no means of measurement, impress us with a vague and overpowering sense of antiquity. All geologists, indeed, are now prepared to admit that man has existed on our earth for a much longer period than was until recently supposed to have been the case.”⁴⁹ The anthropologist Edward B. Tylor wrote:

Thus geology establishes a principle which lies at the very foundation of the science of anthropology. Until of late, while it use to be reckoned by chronologists that the earth and man were less than 6,000 years old, the science of geology could hardly exist, there being no room for its long processes of building up the strata containing the remains of its vast successions of plants and animals. These are now accounted for on the theory that geological time extends over millions of years. It is true that man reaches back comparatively little way into this immense lapse of time.⁵⁰

The geological researches of Charles Lyell helped to demonstrate just how long human history was, orienting it upon more precise temporal lines than Haeckel and other biologists were able to. The work, however, was controversial, as it privileged science over theology as the authority on human history. If, as Lyell thought, the Mississippi River was between 67,000 and 100,000 years old, or the ice age occurred roughly 800,000 years before Christ, then the creationist belief that the earth was just 6,000 years old was seriously challenged. The rejection of the Bible’s “standard chronology” led to an entirely new concept: that of geological time, which spanned vast tracts of historical space. Just as the biological disciplines had done, fields such as geology, archaeology, and history began to issue calls for scholars to delve as deeply into the past as possible, to trace the existence of humankind to points theretofore uncharted on the map of history.

The naturalist Thomas H. Huxley took his cue from these many disciplines, building upon the idea that man’s history was longer than previously believed.

⁴⁹ John Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times: As Illustrated By Ancient Remains and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages* (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1869), 410.

⁵⁰ Edward B. Tylor, *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1906 [1881]), 33-34.

Knowledge was in a state of flux in late nineteenth century was, a period when science was threatening to undo truths once thought immutable; such iconoclasm could make scientific research controversial, and Huxley's work was as radical as it came.⁵¹ He was fully in step with the other thinkers examined thus far, making him a useful source for Hall, who turned frequently to Huxley in the pages *Adolescence*. Huxley accepted the premise that man's history was longer than formerly believed and incorporated into his work the basic tenets of Haeckel's recapitulatory embryology—the evidence, he wrote, “appears to me sufficient to place beyond all doubt about the structural unity of man with the rest of the animal world.”⁵² But while Haeckel had explored remote periods of physiological history, Huxley was more interested in the relationship between humans and their closer mammalian ancestors, particularly the primates. Their methods, however, did not greatly differ: both constructed genealogies based upon the shared structural similarities revealed by comparative anatomy and then assembled taxonomies that allied humans with their ancestors from the animal kingdom. That man and ape—especially the chimpanzee and gorilla—bore an undeniable structural likeness suggested that the human form had been inherited from monkeys. Comparable limbs, pelvis, spinal column, teeth, and cranium forced two formerly distinct morphological histories into one, leading Huxley to claim that “for the skulls, no less than for the skeleton in general, the proposition holds good, that the difference between Men and the Gorilla are of smaller value than those between the Gorilla and some other Apes.”⁵³ Darwin imported Huxley's conclusions from *Man's Place in Nature* directly into his *Descent of Man*: “Prof. Huxley, in the opinion of most competent judges, has conclusively shewn that in every visible

⁵¹ Huxley, *Man's Place in Nature*, 72.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 97.

character man differs less from the higher apes, than these do from the lower members of the same order of Primates.”⁵⁴

Huxley’s comparisons of animals’ brains led to him to the same conclusions that his examinations of skeletons had: “As if to demonstrate, by a striking example, the impossibility of erecting any cerebral barrier between man and the apes, Nature has provided us, in the latter animals, with *an almost complete series of gradations* from brains little higher than that of a Rodent, to brains little lower than that of Man.”⁵⁵ It had been a cruel discovery:

from the crown and summit of the animal creation down to creatures, from which there is but a step, as it seems, to the lowest, smallest, and least intelligent of the placental Mammals [it] is as if nature herself has foreseen the arrogance of man, and with Roman severity had provided that his intellect, by its very triumphs, should call into prominence the slaves, admonishing the conqueror that he is but dust.⁵⁶

Huxley’s conclusion that the kingdom of man was so closely related to that of animals was humbling a one. But it was not the end of the story. The divergence of man and ape did not mark the end of the evolution of humanity, which was not itself a monolithic category, but a collection of widely diverging types. Man’s departure from the primate world and his journey to the gates of modern civilization had taken countless generations of evolutionary struggle. But Huxley and other evolutionists insisted that not all men had traversed the same evolutionary course, and not all shared in the spoils of evolutionary victories equally. Indeed, just as the animal kingdom presented a series of evolutionary gradations, so did the family of man; from these gradations developmental scholars accounted for social, cultural, and intellectual differences between varying civilizations.

⁵⁴ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 18.

⁵⁵ Huxley, *Man’s Place in Nature*, 112. Author’s emphasis.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 124-5.

Racial and ethnic difference was explained in evolutionary terms, dividing groups into gradations and types such as modern and primitive, savage and civilized. Thus the transition from Simian man to intelligent being had not been a seamless leap, as evolutionary steps never were. Instead, a series of physiological, cultural, and intellectual permutations filled the many gaps that separated superior forms from inferior ones.

With the construction of a teleology of human development, with its genesis in simple organic forms and its termination in the establishment of complex social organizations, came a host of developmentally oriented disciplines that studied each stage. The focus of each of these fields was aimed at particular episode of man's evolutionary history—embryology studied the cellular birth of humankind, comparative anatomy traced man's early progenitive stock, and primatology concentrated on more recent episodes of mammalian evolution. Following these fields came physical anthropology, which compared and contrasted different groups of people according to physical characteristics. Other scholars, such as cultural anthropologists and genetic psychologists, ordered man according to his level of civilization or sophistication of cognitive thought, but the physical anthropologist was allied more closely with the biologist, gauging human progress not through social or cultural achievement, but against a series of physiological criteria. Physical anthropology differentiated human types according to corporeal characteristics, be they external differences in appearance, or internal differences of morphological structure. Using the simian type as its lowest reference point and the Western European as its highest, races were awarded rungs of varying height on the ladder of evolution based on their proximity to either of these extremes. This method of differentiation produced a seemingly objective empirical

formula for determining racial and ethnic difference, while at the same time providing the means to order and rank them. The result was the creation of a racial lineage that accounted for all the varieties of man, from those forms deemed inferior and simian, such as the Australasian, to those regarded as superior, such as the Aryan type.

In Haeckel's broad typology, humanity had been envisioned as a coherent entity, with all the world's people in one distinctive group. But physical anthropologists and other race scientists divided humanity into a more fine-grained organization. Daniel Brinton, an ethnologist from the University of Pennsylvania, an authority familiar to Hall, catalogued humanity based on racial characteristics. In Brinton's work race trumped individuality: "The traits of race thus overslaugh the variable characteristics of the family, the sex or the individual, and maintain themselves uniform and unalterable in the pure blood of the stock though all experience."⁵⁷ This science was not to be any less rigorous or esoteric than the evolutionary embryologist's examination of microscopic phenomena. Certainly any ordinary observer could classify racial types based on the way people looked, but it took an expert to detect racial characteristics that remained unnoticed to the untrained eye; that races differed in "internal structures and organs" was known only to the "man of science."⁵⁸ Racial classification, then, was to be more than prejudice learned from experience or tradition, but a scientific practice based on empirical data resultant from supposedly objective criteria. Here human differences were not vaguely recognized, but precisely measured—physical anthropology constituted a new way of seeing (and organizing) people: difference determined by scientific rigor.

⁵⁷ Daniel G. Brinton, *Races and Peoples: Lectures on the Science of Ethnography* (New York: N.D.C. Hodges, 1890), 18.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

Consider the words of one Italian anthropologist, whose interest in racial differences focused on studying crania:

The greatest variation in a series of human crania cannot be distinguished by an untrained eye...Little by little a useful habit and keen eye are acquired, by means of which the slightest variation are detected...⁵⁹

The examination of externalized racial traits like skin color, physiognomic attributes, or cranial shape and size provided for only the most rudimentary classifications. Thorough investigation required delving deeper into the human body, examining it in its totality:

“All parts of the body,” noted Brinton, “have been minutely scanned, measured and weighed, in order to erect a science of the comparative anatomy of the races.”⁶⁰

Meticulous physical investigations allowed ethnologists and physical anthropologists to draw conclusions about the qualities and aptitudes any particular race, conclusions that the casual observer fueled by informal prejudicial evidence could not have drawn. Such science not only entrenched racist thinking, but it also helped to professionalize it: racism under scientific guise became privileged knowledge, housed institutionally under the care of experts.

“Higher” and “lower” racial types were determined by the number and degree of simian characteristics that had been retained over the course of evolution—if man had evolved from the apes, the argument went, then races resembling apes were more closely related to the animal kingdom than those who did not; consequently, they were less evolved. The presence of simian characteristics suggested that some races were lower not just in the evolution of physical characteristics but intellectual ability as well: some

⁵⁹ Guiseppe Sergi, *The Varieties of the Human Species; Principles and Method of Classification*. *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, No. 969 (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 1894), 25.

⁶⁰ Brinton, *Races and Peoples*, 49.

physical traits, wrote Brinton, “bear intimate relations to mental capacity, and where the body presents many points of arrested or retarded development, we may be sure that the mind will also.”⁶¹ This was a basic premise of comparative craniology, the study of skull and brain size, which held that “cranial capacity corresponded directly with the degree of civilization achieved.”⁶² Indeed, physical structure was thought to determine the less tangible qualities, such as intelligence and culture: within the lesser evolved brain existed a “visceral and organic structure that was physiologically juxtaposed to its intellectual capacity.”⁶³

That the symptoms of arrested development were signaled by the retention of simian characteristics provided scientists with a relatively simple measuring stick that could be applied to all the races of man, leading to the construction of an evolutionary table that ordered the races, just as evolutionary biologists had sought to order the species. Wrote one anthropologist, commenting on the physiological criteria he employed in positioning the lower races nearer to the animal kingdom, “These characters are simioid, and the races possessing them in largest number and development are lowest in the scale. Measured by these criteria the Caucasian stands at the head of the racial scale and the Negro at its bottom.”⁶⁴ Commenting on these findings, Theodore Gill agreed that those of African decent possessed more ape-like characteristics than Caucasians:

in color, the prognathous jaws, and the depressed nose, and those characteristics are doubtless the result of inheritance and retention from our common ancestral stock. To the extent of manifestation of such characteristics (and others coincident with them), the Negro is an example of retarded or arrested development.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid., 47.

⁶² John S. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995 [1971]), 18.

⁶³ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁴ D.K. Shute, “Racial Anatomical Peculiarities,” *American Anthropologist* 9 (April 1896), 127.

⁶⁵ Comments made by Theodore Gill, Ibid., 131.

Similar remarks can be found in Hall's work on adolescence, influenced as it was by the kind of thinking outlined above: "In apes and lower races of men the sutures of the skull unite first in the frontal, then in the parietal, and last in the occipital region, while in civilized man this order is reverse."⁶⁶

Daniel Brinton's litmus test for inferiority was exhaustive. Included among the many marks of physiological lowliness shared by primates and the "lower" races were simplicity and early union of the cranial sutures; presence of the frontal process of the temporal bone; wide nasal aperture; prominence of the jaws; recession of the chin; early appearance and retention of the wisdom teeth; unusual length and perforation of the humerus; continuation of the "heart" line across the hand; a narrow pelvis; deficiency of the calf muscle; flattening of the tibia; and elongation of the heel. Together, these physical traits constituted a kind of check list that distinguished the level of racial advancement along evolutionary lines—the more of these characteristics that were present, the "lower" the race, while "higher" races were thought to possess relatively few, if any, of them. By these criteria, of course, white Europeans were positioned atop the evolutionary scale of mankind, while the "Negro" was among the lowest.⁶⁷ Darwin reached the same conclusion, though his thoughts on race were more tempered than some of his colleagues': "It is an interesting fact that ancient races...more frequently present structures which resemble those of the lower animals than do the modern. One chief

⁶⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 75.

⁶⁷ For Brinton's list of these characteristics, see pp. 47-48, from which I have quoted and paraphrased.

cause seems to be that the ancient races stand somewhat nearer in the long line of descent to their remote animal-like progenitors.”⁶⁸ Some authors were even more explicit:

Old Sophia, then apparently over sixty years of age, had white hair, and the most monkey-like face I ever saw upon a human being. The projection of the lower jaw and the low cast of countenance denoted an inferior physique.⁶⁹

The physiological similarities shared by apes and “lower” races were also thought to be shared by children as well. In fact, Brinton described the inferior physical characteristics possessed by inferior races as “fetal, infantile, or simian,”⁷⁰ thus creating in one fell swoop a category of inferiority that included man’s ape-like ancestors, races of African descent, and—significantly—children. Adult members of the so-called savage races were frequently compared to children of the civilized lands and comparisons are not hard to come by in the literature. (“The sternum of a Bushman is often not as much developed as that of a new-born infant with us.”⁷¹) Hall comfortably transitioned between these groups as well and rarely is any one group mentioned without reference to another. “Slowly and relatively late in the child and the race is the thumb opposed,” wrote Hall, suggesting links between infants and apes, and then stating that hand-strength (with the important etymological qualifier being “grasp”)⁷² advances as civilization increases: “It is now pretty well established,” he wrote, “that civilized man has greater strength of hand as tested thus than savages.” Time and time again, this unlucky trio—ape, child, and

⁶⁸ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 40.

⁶⁹ James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians; or The Black War of Van Dieman’s Land* (New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1970 [1870]), 279.

⁷⁰ Brinton, *Races and Peoples*, 48.

⁷¹ Daniel G. Brinton, “Variations in the Human Skeleton and Their Causes,” *American Anthropologist* 7 (October 1894), 384.

⁷² Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 139. “Grip is perhaps the most generalized form of hand power, and the phyletic correlate of its pubescent increment is probably without suggestion arboreal life, but reminiscent of the later development of hand power in the race. The words grasp, apprehend, comprehend, etc., in their etymologies suggest the close relation between mental and manual ability, and remind us of Huxley’s statement that man excels the higher anthropoids no more in varied powers of mind than he does in those of the hand.” Ibid., 142

savage—is made synonymous and their similarities are catalogued in Hall’s treatise, from the most prosaic examples to the most significant.⁷³

Brinton, an monogenetic evolutionist, helped create an evolutionary picture of the development of the human race that placed the “lower” races on the same developmental platform as children from the civilized lands—thus lower races in their adult form resembled other races in their puerile form, a conclusion that helped to build the recapitulationist’s argument that the child was a savage, and the savage a child.

III. G. Stanley Hall’s *Adolescent* and the Theory of Biological Recapitulation

In *Adolescence* everything is explained with reference to the theory of recapitulation and this is as true for the adolescent’s physiological development as it is for his intellectual and social growth. The stages of growth experienced by all youth, patterns which transcended racial particularities, were seen by recapitulationists as swift reenactments of evolutionary change that had transformed the human body at various times in the long history of man. Recapitulationists, following the Haeckelian model, thought that individual development was actually *caused* by the phylogenetic process—phylogeny was assumed to be the mechanical cause of ontogeny, a point Haeckel himself attempted to clarify in a rather murky passage:

Phylogenesis...is a physiological process, which, like all other physiological functions of organisms, is determined with absolute necessity by mechanical causes. These causes are motions of the atoms and molecules that comprise organic material...Phylogenesis is therefore neither the foreordained, purposeful result of an intelligent creator, nor the product of any sort of unknown, mystical force of nature, but rather the simple and necessary operation of...physical-

⁷³ Ibid., 141.

chemical processes.⁷⁴

Darwin wasn't convinced, as Stephen Jay Gould tells us, and probably from no fault of his own. But others were, despite the lack of hard evidence. Haeckel might have struggled to explain the exact means that governed the process of recapitulation, but his point was clear enough: the force of phylogeny acted upon most basic building blocks of life, and whatever those "physical-chemical processes" may have been, exactly, they contained a historically determined map that guided growth and physical transformation. Hall paid little attention to the minute technicalities of recapitulation and was happy to explain the underlying force of phylogeny as a kind of magical process, seeing phylogeny as the historical soul that pervaded all life and determined the direction that it took. But for Hall, recapitulation also appealed to common sense. It was only logical that an organism, as it developed, had to march through the developmental stages of its predecessors. If the embryo recapitulated the earliest stages of biological history, why shouldn't the mature human form retrace the steps of anthropoid history? Hall's discussion of the growth during the early teens, then, was at the same time an examination of the growth periods of the race. The physical characteristics that so often defined the age of adolescence, such as the development of the sex organs or the rapid period of growth at puberty's onset, were determined by phylogeny. Incorporating the spirit of Haeckel's embryological studies into his own work on children, Hall linked periods of adolescent development with their historical concomitants—stages of physical evolution of the earliest races of man. Each aspect of adolescent growth corresponded to points in the history of the race.

If the physiological patterns and rhythms that all contemporary children

⁷⁴ Quoted in Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 78-79.

experienced were determined by human history, and if their physical states corresponded with the physiological condition of early man, then the onus Hall placed on himself was to find historical antecedents that correlated individual growth with developmental changes experienced by the species at large. And in the initial pages of *Adolescence* Hall attempted to do just this. All of the adolescent's physiological experiences were seen as nothing more than contemporary manifestations of age-old laws. Translating Haeckel's theories into explanations of ontogenic and phylogenic development was a rather speculative game; finding antecedents in the history of man was as imprecise a search as the attempt to locate the simple organisms with the human embryo. Hall followed Haeckel's method of creating speculative, if not wholly conjectural, historical antecedents; more often than not, the formulation of theoretical eras relied more on imagination than on empirical evidence.

Prior to the pubertal outburst of physiological energy young people experienced a period of corporeal repose—a “lower plateau of growth”—when the prepubescent individual grew only slightly.⁷⁵ Later, at the dawn of adolescence, this moment of calm gave way to a period of rapid and dramatic growth when the individual developed into a larger and stronger form. What explained this universal ebb and flow, shared by all adolescents? The stage of physiological quietude represented for Hall a period in evolutionary history when life was lived in relative ease, in a calm environment demanding little in the way of physical prowess.

All this suggests on the recapitulation theory some long stationary period during which life had been pretty fully unfolded and could be led indefinitely with stability and security in some not too cold Lemuria, New Atlantis, Eden, or other possible *cunabulum gentium*. [*The birthplace of one's parentage*] ... This short pause would thus be the present echo of a long phyletic when for many

⁷⁵ Hall, *Adolescence Vol. I*, 44.

generations our prehuman forebears were pigmoid adults, leading short lives and dying at or before the pubic growth increment now occurs.⁷⁶

The implications of such thinking could be dramatic. In this illustrative passage, the theory of recapitulation literally removes the prepubescent child from the human realm and reassigns him to “prehuman” status. One of the most dangerous tendencies of recapitulatory thinking was the conflation of childhood with categories that carried within them negative connotations. “Prehuman” and “savage” were effectively pejorative terms, created by a biased science that held “noncivilized” peoples in low esteem. But recapitulation not only redefined the status of children, it also reinforced racial and cultural prejudices. Once recapitulation forged historical alliances between children, savages, and prehuman, ape-like ancestors, those categories became discursively interchangeable. Thus,

the boy of ten or eleven is tolerably well adjusted to the environment of savage life in a warm country where he could readily live independently of his parents, discharging all the functions necessary to his personal life, but lacking only the reproductive function.⁷⁷

If children were, for all intents and purposes, savages, did it not follow that savages were merely children?

At the onset of puberty all children experienced a period of dramatic growth. For Hall, this suggested a period in human history when environmental exigencies forced populations to migrate away from the relative ease of their Edenic homes and out into a dangerous world, where the rewards of survival were conferred upon those who exhibited traits of physical superiority. It was a time in evolutionary history when size and stature

⁷⁶ Ibid., 44-45.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 44.

helped one to adapt and flourish in inhospitable lands and climes, when natural selection favored larger members of a group: “the struggle with the saber-toothed tiger, the great cave bear, mastodon, Irish elks, gigantic sloths, and extinct vertebrates of the Quaternary age, may have been a factor in stimulating greater growth in man.”⁷⁸ During these distant historical periods a premium was placed on physical prowess and aggressiveness, and hostile environments spurred man to evolve into a stronger and larger creature. It was a page taken directly from *Origin of Species*, where Darwin stated that as “the most favoured or improved varieties will be enabled to spread[,] there will be much extinction of the less improved forms, and the relative proportional numbers of the various inhabitants of the renewed continent will again be changed; and again there will be a fair field for natural selection to improve still further the inhabitants, and thus produce new species.”⁷⁹ Moments of such development in humanity’s physical form corresponded with stages of individual growth—during adolescence the individual’s own development was seen as a transition from an inferior form to a more improved one, reenacting perfectly the changes that natural selection had effected in epochs long past.

Unfortunately, the forces of evolution and natural selection had rendered man’s ancient forbears extinct, making it impossible to study the “missing links” in the history of humankind. The problem was the same one Haeckel faced in his attempt to locate simple life forms and, true to his allegiance, Hall’s solution was the same one employed by Haeckel: the theory of recapitulation could fill in the gaps of evolutionary history by locating extinct forms within living ones. Remnants of the early history of anthropoid man were thought to be found in two places: first, within the bodies of growing children,

⁷⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁷⁹ Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 90.

who necessarily recapitulated the physiological history of the species; and, second, in physiological makeup of those races who remained marooned in past historical periods.

Despite the current evolutionary position of any particular race, all originated from the same point. Natural scientists such as Darwin, Haeckel, and Huxley attempted to demonstrate the early origins of the human type through comparative studies between the kingdoms of man and animal, while scientists focusing on modern man sought physiological precedent through physical anthropology. One of Hall's major contributions was to add another method to this project. His studies of children also linked the races in a monophyletic bond, demonstrating with further certainty the unity of species theory. Comparative, cross-racial studies of infants, for example, showed that the newborns of all people, regardless of race or ethnicity, shared conspicuous similarities. Alexander F. Chamberlain, a close colleague of Hall's, remarked: "The striking resemblance of children among all the races of man, seem to indicate the origin of all mankind from one primitive stock, while the remarkable physical similarities between the young human and the young simian appear likewise to demonstrate in the remoter past, a common origin of the human and the anthropoid groups."⁸⁰ The distance that any race gained from this original child-like and simian structure depended upon the amount of evolutionary variation that that race had experienced *after* the point where all shared equally in this original form. Thus, evolutionary progress was measured according to proximity or distance from this early standard, represented as a dark-skinned, ape-like ancestral archetype. "There is an ideal infant type," wrote Chamberlain, "characterized by large head, long body, short limbs, etc., proportions common to the great majority of children of all races, the special features which distinguish the adult individuals

⁸⁰ Alexander F. Chamberlain, "The 'Child Type,'" *Pedagogical Seminary* 6 (December 1899), 481.

belonging to the various races of man being due to the retardation or to the advancement of these child-marks.” Racial attributes were thus equated with those of children, with “low” races seen as more child-like than those that had diverged from this original type.

For the ethnologist, the European races showed “signs of a secondary or derived origin,” meaning that they had evolved from “primary” racial types like Asians and Africans, the racial elders of European stock. Brinton extended his racial thinking deep into geological time, hypothesizing that the racial differences present in modern times developed 20,000 to 100,000 years prior to the present geological period. Indeed, racial differentiation had occurred before the “dawn of history,” when the planet’s main geographical regions were “peopled by nations resembling each other.” Brinton located the forebears of the European races in northern Africa, a finding which may have disturbed popular sentiment even more than Huxley’s work had. “This statement may astonish you,” Brinton wrote, “and I know no writer who has properly emphasized the fact that the white race is geographically and historically an *African* race.”⁸¹ If the “dark races” were the parents of Europeans, then it followed that African people were phyletically older than Caucasians. The introduction of darker peoples into the European, Asian, and eventually American continents dispersed what had once been a common stock, subjecting them to a variety of environmental challenges that eventually, and over millennia, altered their original appearances. That some characteristics remained could be explained historically: “We are strengthened in this assumption that the earliest Europeans were not only long-headed, but also dark-complexioned,” added one author, “by various points in our inquiry thus far. We have proved the prehistoric antiquity of the living Cro-Magnon type in southwestern France; and we saw that among these peasants

⁸¹ Brinton, *Races and Peoples*, 97; 105.

the prevalence of black hair and eyes is very striking.”⁸²

Man’s early “natural propensity to roam,” along with the environmental necessity to do so, dispersed relatively homogenous groups across the continents, forcing members of an original stock to adapt to different natural surroundings. Eventually, this led to a wide variety of racial types.⁸³ As opposed to those who had remained in the stable African environment, the migrants who settled in the more demanding climes began to evolve into new racial types. Settlers on the European continent slowly separated themselves from the original human type, effectively leaving their southern ancestors behind. Asians and Europeans thus developed into new and improved races, taking their first steps out of the physiological childhood and into a new evolutionary epoch. As new racial characteristics emerged, previous ones were regarded as somewhat anachronistic, and certainly less advanced.

Man’s pre-pubertal existence on the African continent had been primarily animalistic, where the majority of life’s activities focused on meeting only the most basic of needs. But migration to new lands required greater intellectual effort as populations had to develop new strategies for survival. As man conquered the initial environmental challenges faced in new lands, evolutionary survival depended more and more upon mental acumen and the development of social and cultural institutions. The migrating groups who were faced with these demands evolved into something new, while those left behind failed to do so, remaining true to their animalistic tendencies and falling behind the developing races. Wrote Darwin, “Civilised races can certainly resist changes of all

⁸² William Z. Ripley, *The Races of Europe, A Sociological Study* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899), 466.

⁸³ Briton, *Races and Peoples*, 73-74.

kinds far better than savages; and in this respect they resemble domesticated animals.”⁸⁴

Anthropologists oriented racial distinctions upon temporal lines, rendering the “dark races” not only less advanced than the lighter ones, but older. For thinkers like Brinton and Hall, this evolutionary theory explained not only the history of human development, but also why some races could thrive in the modern world while others failed. Wrote Brinton:

The tendency of the negro race in Africa is that which we observe among negro children in the public schools of the United States. Their powers develop quite as rapidly as those of white children up to a certain point, up to the age of thirteen or fourteen; but then there comes a diminution, often a cessation, of their mental development. The physical overhauls the psychical, and they turn away from the pursuit of culture. They are unwilling to undertake, they are unequal to, the more arduous intellectual tasks.⁸⁵

Here the point is made clearly: all races might share in a common ancestry, but only some had evolved into more sophisticated forms, leaving the rest permanently in a state of arrested development. Upon the grand continuum of evolutionary progress, there were written a number of sub-teleologies, which determined just how far different races were capable of progressing. It was a sad truth, then, that African peoples, regardless of efforts to transplant and educate them, were stuck in an evolutionary period with no hopes of escape. As Brinton was clear to note, race trumped individuality, and effort was hampered by one’s racial legacy—try as they might, African peoples were children, with no hope of ever growing up. The children of the advanced races, however, were more fortunate in that they had the option of continuing along the upward path of evolutionary development; as members of the privileged races they contained within them untapped phyletic histories that the lower races had never experienced. Thus it became imperative

⁸⁴ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 220.

⁸⁵ Brinton, *Races and Peoples*, 192-193.

that young people were developed properly, as youth's proximity to early phyletic history made that stage of life one "of ever-impending danger of mental or physical relapse."⁸⁶ At the same time, however, there was much to be hopeful for. Relapse and arrest were very real possibilities, but so was the "the promise...of a slow but ever higher development." Indeed, that was the great lesson that the theory of recapitulation had taught Hall; after establishing the link between adolescence and the history of the race, he sought to develop a program for youth that would guarantee their progress up the evolutionary scale. "Hence there is need of the most careful study of consummate practical wisdom," wrote Hall, "in providing the most favorable environment and eliminating every possible cause of arrest or aversion. This is indeed the practical problem of this book."⁸⁷

IV. Anthropometry and the Enumeration of Adolescence

Efforts to classify the races in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries had not been exceedingly scientific. "Studies" of foreign peoples were oftentimes no more than the published anecdotes of Western travelers, missionaries, or military personnel. As these "travelers penetrated the various nonwestern cultures of the world, their descriptive accounts of the variations among groups of men multiplied by the hundreds."⁸⁸ Racial taxonomies were, for the most part, based on outward physical appearance. Scientists in the nineteenth century, however, were far more meticulous—if not entirely obsessive—in their investigations, though the biases that accompanied them into the laboratory did not

⁸⁶ Hall, *Adolescence Vol. 1*, 49.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution*, 3.

dramatically differ from the prejudicial thinking of their predecessors. Rather than focusing solely on externally visible characteristics, such as skin color, skull shape, or variations in the facial attributes, antropometrists looked deep within, seeing marks of inferiority that had gone unnoticed by casual observers of racial differences. Early attempts to study young people had been as equally primitive as early nineteenth-century race science and not until the latter half of the century, when the child study movement imported wholesale the methods of racial anthropometry, did rigorous and scientific treatises on children begin to appear.

The first American efforts to isolate and study young people as a population distinct from the adult world began in 1790 with the first national census. Its original intent was modest and gathered only three pieces of an individual's information: race, sex, and age. Nor were age data gathered with great exactitude; children were registered only as being below or above sixteen years of age and the purpose of the age data in the years before public schooling was used only "for the purpose of ascertaining the military and industrial strength of the country."⁸⁹ The 1830 census measured the age of children with a bit more precision, when the following categories were noted: under ten years of age; over 10; between 16-26 and 26-45; and over 45 years old. No further changes concerning age were made until 1880, when the measurement was registered in five-year intervals.

The scope of the United States Census steadily increased with each taking, until 1880-1900, when the amount of data collected by the Department of the Interior exploded. The census of 1880, for instance, greatly expanded the kind of information

⁸⁹ Carroll D. Wright, *The History and Growth of the United States Census, Prepared for the Senate Committee of the Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 13.

taken, as is shown by this summary of personal information collected:

Head of family, as with son, daughter, servant, boarder, or other; civil (or conjugal) condition, as single, married, widowed, or divorced; place of birth of parents, as State or Territory, or country, if of foreign birth; condition of health, as sick or temporarily disabled; physical disabilities, maimed, crippled, bedridden, or otherwise disabled; and number of months unemployed during the census year, in connection with the return of profession, trade, or occupation.⁹⁰

And this was by no means the extent of it; whereas previous censuses had collected data according to six general schedules (social, industrial, and agricultural statistics, for instance), the census of 1890 contained two-hundred schedules, “relating to very many subjects and comprehending several thousand inquiries and details.”⁹¹ As the following table illustrates, census taking became more rigorous over the course of the nineteenth century, providing an almost bewildering amount of data available to social reformers and governmental policy makers.

Total Number of Inquiries Taken in the US Census, 1790-1890

1790	4
1800	4
1810	7
1820	20
1830	7
1840	82
1850	138
1860	142
1870	156
1880	13,010
1890	13,161

Source: Carroll D. Wright, *The History and Growth of the United States Census, Prepared for the Senate Committee of the Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 87.

The expansion of the 1890 census was in step with a general trend in the development of statistical methods toward the close of the nineteenth century, a time when social

⁹⁰ Ibid., 62.

⁹¹ Ibid., 85.

reformers began to rely heavily on statistical knowledge, believing that quantification was the necessary prerequisite for the solution of social problems. Statistics, when gathered in sufficient numbers, were thought to provide insights into the origins of social ills and suggested what paths ought to be taken in remedying them.⁹²

The censuses prior to the 1904 publication of *Adolescence* might have provided an exhaustive amount of statistical detail, but a quantitative description of America's youth remained muddled. This posed problems for educational reformers who desired the same quantitative edge from which others were benefiting. Unfortunately for those interested in the study of children, however, census data enumerating young populations remained imprecise—the 1890 census stuck with the quinquennial precedent, giving scholars little idea of the exact age of the American population. Nor were these data entirely reliable. The Department of Interior, in its report on the 1890 census, noted that “No matter how specific the instructions to the enumerators on this point may be, the natural tendency is, and probably always will be, to give the nearest 5 or 10 year period, especially where definite information is not at hand.”⁹³ Wrote one observer, commenting on the 1890 census, “Experience has shown that it is extremely difficult to ascertain the true number of young children in any population.”⁹⁴

Surprisingly, more precise tabulations of the young population were not provided by school districts. In 1871, the Commissioner of Education, frustrated with the levels of incompleteness and disorganization in the data he received from individual districts,

⁹² Theodore M. Porter, *The Rise of Statistical Thinking, 1820-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 30.

⁹³ Department of the Interior, Census Office, “Progress of the Nation, Part II.,” *Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1897), xv.

⁹⁴ Allyn A. Young, “The Enumeration of Children,” *Publications of the American Statistical Association* 7 (March 1901), 21.

called for a standardization of data. The statistics his office received, he complained, were “all so diverse, have so few points in common, that any comparison which would be entirely safe and trustworthy between the results was manifestly impossible.”⁹⁵ Data relating to ages was, like the national census, tabulated broadly, focusing only on the range of legal school ages in any given state or (at best) enumerating the total number of children enrolled in the elementary, grammar, and secondary levels of schooling. In light of this problem, the Commissioner’s advisory role was limited; without knowing the number of school children in the country, it was difficult to make even the most general recommendations.

Unreliable and incomplete as they were, census reports and data shared by departments of education constituted the first attempts to study the youthful population quantitatively. But experts in the latter part of the nineteenth century were unsatisfied with those public efforts and sought to remedy the situation by entering the schools themselves, agreeing that “ever more data on the child needed to be gathered.”⁹⁶ This led almost immediately to an outpouring of specialized literature, providing researchers for the first time with a detailed picture of America’s younger populations.

G. Stanley Hall is generally credited with conducting the first significant scientific study of American school children, published as “The Contents of Children’s Minds” in 1883. The essay, writes one educational historian, quickly became a “model” for scientific studies of children, “which identified a series of sharply differentiated developmental stages [that] isolated different norms—including norms about weight,

⁹⁵ John Eaton, Jr., *Report of the Commissioner of Education* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 52.

⁹⁶ Herbert Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 38.

size, and cognitive development—that could be applied to children of particular ages.”⁹⁷ Studies focusing exclusively on young people soon came rolling off the presses, a great number of which were later incorporated into *Adolescence*. Included among them was a “literature of some threescore very valuable memoirs and tabulations of human growth...to say nothing of a far larger number of miscellaneous records kept in schools, gymnasia, homes, institutions for special classes, etc.”⁹⁸

Many of the early scientific studies conducted on young people focused on the physiological side of development and employed the methods used in anthropometric studies of race and ethnicity. Just as anthropometry was uncovering the minute differences between the various races, anthropometry in the schools was helping to generate new ideas about young people by examining their many developmental differences. The new discipline of anthropometry was especially important to G. Stanley Hall, who was always sympathetic to scientific programs that contained developmental theories. Of particular interest to Hall was the idea that man’s whole, when divided into its constitutive parts, could provide a more detailed picture of the developmental history of the race. Drawing upon the anthropometric research of others, Hall was convinced that each organ in the body grew in concert with recapitulatory history—in essence, the body’s organs did not grow in proportion to one another, but developed at different rates. “Each organ,” Hall wrote, “has its youth, maturity, and old age, and that these do not coincide either with each other or with the stages of body growth as a whole.”⁹⁹ Thus the kidneys, for example, achieved their maximal form in life’s third decade, while the liver

⁹⁷ Ibid., 37; Steven Mintz, *Huck’ Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 188-189.

⁹⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 6.

⁹⁹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 55.

did not reach full maturity until the fifth. With this view in mind, anthropometry offered Hall the plausible theory that some organs reached the moment of optimal development during puberty: “While pubertal growth reaches more or less simultaneously nearly every part of the body,” he wrote, “its energies focus upon certain organs more than others...To determine these periods...is one of the chief quests of genetic study, and where established, the result is fraught with most important practical results.”¹⁰⁰ Studies of the adolescent brain, for instance, showed it to experience a period of slowed growth, while the “reproductive organs, hips, and muscles then grow at an augmented rate.”¹⁰¹ Physiological changes occurring at puberty were thus correlated with the evolution of the species: “The rapidity of the growth of a part is directly as the degree of development acquired by the phyletic progress.”¹⁰²

Taken as a whole, adolescence was an important phase in the life of any young person, signaling the period at which one began the transition to maturity. But anthropometry did not approach adolescence as if it was a complete state of being; instead, it divided the adolescent into a collection of developmental units, where parts were observed and measured separately. These efforts, wrote one educator, were “undoubtedly stimulated by the scientific spirit of the age, which seeks to measure all that is measurable, and to weigh all that is capable of being weighed.”¹⁰³ And there was a lot to measure and weigh: the number of physical measurements taken could in fact be

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 54-55.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰² Ibid., 56.

¹⁰³ D.A. Sargent, “The Physical Test of a Man,” *Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education, Fifth Annual Meeting, Cambridge and Boston, Mass., April 4-5, 1890* (1890), 36.

staggering, subjecting young people to incredibly detailed examinations. The vast catalogue of measurements taken by this anthropometrist was representative:

age; weight; height; height of knee; height sitting; height of pubes; height of crotch; height of naval; height of sternum; girth of head; girth of neck; girth of chest; girth of waist; girth of hips; girth of thighs; girth of knee; girth of calf; girth of instep; girth of upper arm; girth of elbow; girth of forearm; girth of wrist; breadth of head; breadth of neck; breadth of shoulders; breadth of waist; breadth of hips; breadth of nipples; depth of chest; depth of abdomen; length of shoulder to elbow; length from elbow to finger tip; length of foot; stretch of arms; horizontal length; capacity of lungs; expiratory strength; strength of back; strength of legs; strength of chest; strength of upper arms, triceps; strength of upper arms, biceps; strength of forearms; pilosity; color of hair; color of eyes¹⁰⁴

When the theory of recapitulation was combined with the anthropometrical method, certain parts of the young person's body gained prominence over others, as being more central to adolescent development. The trick lay in isolating those important parts and then determining what their proper developmental course should be. It was a normative project, with the dual aims of anthropometry being "the study of the phenomena of growth, the making of physical standards for each age in the period of school life."¹⁰⁵ As evolutionary progress had followed certain lines of development, it was essential that youth not deviate from those paths, lest they suffer from arrested development, retaining the physiological makeup of the savage type. So in measuring the adolescent, all efforts were directed toward the creation of a formula that depicted the desired physical type; those who did not conform were regarded as "abnormal" and were to receive special corrective regimens that would get them back on the track of proper development.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Hitchcock and William G. Anderson, "Also, the Report of the Committee upon the Method of Physical Measurement, Consisting of Dr. D.A. Sargent, Dr. Edw. Hitchcock, and Dr. Wm. G. Anderson, Made at the Same Meeting," *The American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education, at its Second Annual Meeting in Brooklyn, N.Y., November Twenty-Sixth, Eighteen Hundred and Eighty Six* (Brooklyn: Rome Brothers, 1887, 8-13.

¹⁰⁵ William Townsend Porter, "The Growth of St. Louis Children," *Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis* 6 (No. 12, 1894), 263.

By the 1880s and 1890s experts had turned the public schools into laboratories for studying children, finding within their walls an unlimited and untapped reserve of data. School officials welcomed them and were sympathetic to the normative tendencies contained within the anthropometric project, committed as they were to the “proper” development of young people. With late nineteenth-century school populations growing, and an increasing number of adolescents remaining in school for longer periods, scholars realized for the first time the possibility of studying the adolescent population. Their segregation from society at large followed the nineteenth-century trend of setting aside distinct institutional spaces for different categories of people, be they criminal, impoverished, or insane. Educational institutions, writes David Tyack, “followed similar patterns and performed somewhat comparable functions. A certain category of people—the young—were taken away from the rest of society for a portion of their lives and separated into schools.”¹⁰⁶ Institutional segregation allowed for specialized study and as increasing numbers of adolescents remained in school, the opportunities for studying them multiplied.

Such studies, as noted, subjected children to the same kinds of detailed examinations that ethnologists had performed upon the various races since the middle of the nineteenth century—anthropometricists in the West subjected their own populations to a mode of study that had previously been reserved for the “inferior” races. As one member of the field noted, anthropometric studies of Westerners found their precedent in race science:

Students of anthropology have confined their attention largely to uncivilized and prehistoric man, and consequently there is very little knowledge of modern

¹⁰⁶ David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 72.

civilized man, as compared with his less-worthy predecessors or contemporaries. We know more about rocks and brutes than about modern man. We have made sciences of the two former, but a science of the latter hardly exists.¹⁰⁷

A scientific understanding of modern man, the author continued, required “a more thorough study of children, on whom the future of civilization depends.”¹⁰⁸

One of the most important tendencies that the scientific study of children inherited from anthropometry was the propensity to categorize—just as the scientific study of race “discovered” various types and divided them from the whole, the anthropometric study of children parceled youngsters out into various groups. Anthropometry helped destroy broad, monolithic categories, preferring instead, small, homogenous groups or types.

Wrote one member of the field:

Subdivision, then, is to be the key to future progress in this study: the race within the nation, the sub-type within the type. And may we not add, as belonging to the same line of study, the individual within the type? Or even, the individual as representative of type?¹⁰⁹

Child-centered anthropometric studies produced average or ideal “types,” built from massive data sets, which were used to determine standards against which all growing children would be measured. In effect, the child was measured twice—first, individual measurements were taken; second, and after many individual measurements had been tabulated to create “types,” each person was *remeasured* against those tabulations and then diagnosed in terms of his relation to that average: Was he advanced or retarded in growth? Was he normal or abnormal? Did his bodily proportions conform to the averages of his age cohort, or did he diverge from them? Unfortunately, deviation from the

¹⁰⁷ “Experimental Study of Children, Including Anthropometrical and Psycho-Physical Measurements of Washington School Children,” 991.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 989.

¹⁰⁹ David F. Lincoln, “Anthropometry Individualized,” *Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education, Tenth Annual Meeting, NY, NY, April 25-27, 1895* (1895), 5.

physiological norms set by anthropometrists was often interpreted as a sign that the child was developing improperly—a diagnosis that was all too often framed in the language of racial inferiority.

The primary identification of people as belonging to “broad types”—Homo Sapien, Caucasian, child—was seen by anthropometric thinkers as problematic and unenlightening. Expansive categories “blot out from sight the essential facts which narrower views reveal.”¹¹⁰ Child-centered anthropometry introduced into educational circles entirely new categories of children. One study published in the early 1890s, for instance, examined over 50,000 London school children and divided the whole into eighteen categories. Arthur McDonald, a member of the U.S. Bureau of Education, called it “the first scientific investigation and the most important contribution to the study of abnormal children in public schools,” and from such studies, he added, schools would be able to segregate children of all different stripes, providing special curricula tailored to their needs.¹¹¹ Interestingly, many of the physiological abnormalities found in the report bore striking similarities to physical characteristics anthropometrists thought common among members of the “lower” races: asymmetrical heads, corrugation of the eyebrows, constant grinning, etc. Of special interest were abnormalities in the crania, which appeared “to be the most important defects in development; they are most numerous and have the highest pathological co-relations of any sign with ‘abnormal nerve signs,’ low nutrition, and mental dullness.” Size of the cranium, it was thought, was a “fair indication

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹¹¹ Francis Warner, “Report to the British Medical Association and Charity Organization Society of London on the Physical and Mental Condition of 50,000 Children Seen in 106 Schools of London.” *US Commission of Education, Report 1890-91*, 1088-90; 1082.

of the size of the brain.”¹¹² Defective or degenerate children presented anomalies that separated them from “normal” children and allied them with the lower races: “deformities in the head; asymmetries in the face and ears; unusually large jaws and ears; defective palates; asymmetrical arms.”¹¹³ Another study made mention of “one boy [with] a celaphic index of 73.33, which is negroid.”¹¹⁴ Characteristics thought to differentiate defective from normal children were similar to those racial marks of inferiority circulated by Daniel Brinton and other physical anthropologists. Recapitulatory thinkers, such as G. Stanley Hall, considered the exhibition of certain physiological characteristics to be a sign of arrested development, outward manifestations that demonstrated an individual’s failure to transition through the race’s physiological epochs.

Conclusion

One of the primary methods employed in the construction of recapitulatory theories was the manufacturing of theoretical ancestors—attempts to develop complete genealogies of human development were necessarily hindered by the fact that much of the race’s ancestry was composed of “missing links” that could not be examined by scientists. Ernst Haeckel’s contributions to this project, though inaccurate, were rather harmless—his theoretical worms and floating sacs were merely attempts to fill in the holes of an ancient organic history that had forever vanished. But the efforts of recapitulationists who attempted to account for missing links in man’s more recent past were not as benign, as they relied heavily on a science that was based on racist premises. Attempts to order

¹¹² Ibid., 1086.

¹¹³ George E. Dawson, “A Study in Youthful Degeneracy,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 4 (December 1896), 227.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 233.

mankind on a developmental scheme placed the races upon a continuum, where they were ranked and ordered according to criteria set by Western scientists. In the end, all non-Western races were transformed from autonomous civilizations into theoretical ancestors, incomplete and underdeveloped versions of the Western type: Non-Western peoples were seen as children of the West. At the same time, Western children were thought to exhibit savage and primitive characteristics; within the theory of recapitulation both of these groups—savages and children—became interchangeable. A science so conceived, as we will see in the next chapter, had dramatic consequences for how Westerners treated each group: colonial powers received from recapitulation a scientific justification for treating their subjects as children, while those who supervised the activities of children gained a scientific justification for treating them as savages.

But biological recapitulation alone was not responsible for this formulation. It only provided for physiological “proof” that children and savages were akin. Further evidence was necessary, data that demonstrated the savage-child likeness in terms of psychological development, intellectual capacity, social abilities, and cultural accomplishments. Biological recapitulation offered a model to those interested in social behavior and a host of scientists, from anthropologists and criminologists, to psychologists and psychiatrists, capitalized upon the findings of recapitulatory science. As will be demonstrated in the next two chapters, recapitulatory theory in the human sciences began where biological recapitulation necessarily ended. Combined, the human and biological sciences offered a model that linked children and savages in innumerable ways, with far-reaching effects on colonial administrative policies in the East and on educational practices in the West.

Chapter Two

The Savage Adolescent

Without knowing them and their ways, we can not understand our children, religion, or education, our own earlier history or that of our institutions. Man was no doubt far longer in their state than they have been in ours.

G. Stanley Hall (1904)¹

I. Ontogeny Recapitulates Savagery: Anthropology and Man's Primitive Legacy

Prior to the American Civil War the major debate in the science of racial development was waged between monogenist and polygenist schools of thought, and the most important question concerned origins: had the races evolved from a single, Edenic ancestor, as the monogenists thought, or had they been birthed by separate, or polygenetic, creations? The question carried considerable political implications during the Civil War period, and polygenism found an especially sympathetic audience among proslavery Southerners. As Louis Menand has recently noted: “as the political temperature rose, polygenism was cited in support of the view that slavery did not violate the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, on grounds that Jefferson’s term ‘all men’ did not, scientifically, mean blacks.”² Proponents of slavery feared that a monogenetic reading of Genesis would undermine Southern society by expanding the family of “man” to include those of African decent. Polygenetic pro-slavers regarded monogenism as a fusion of politicized theology and faulty science, a hijacking of the Bible by radical abolitionists. But the Bible, wrote Josiah Nott, the well-known polygenist from Alabama,

¹ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology And Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, Vol. 1* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969 [1904]), 52.

² Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 112.

was not an inclusive historical document—its pages detailed the history of only one race, and provided no evidence whatsoever that the “dark races” had been spawned from Adam and Eve. Nott’s primary goal was to disabuse his audience of the notion that the races had a common ancestor. He hoped to expose monogenetic thought as a dangerous and false dogma that revised Biblical history in wholly unscientific and unsupportable ways, capable of destroying the Southern way of life. “Scientific truth,” wrote Nott

exemplified in the annals of Astronomy, Geology, Chronology, Geographical distribution of animals, &c., has literally fought its way inch by inch through false ideology. The last grand battle between science and dogmatism, on the primitive origin of races, has now begun. It requires no prophetic eye to foresee that science must again, and finally, triumph.³

Polygenetic thought had been too tied up in the quest to legitimize slavery for it to survive and was largely discredited after Appomattox. Its fall was also effected by Darwinian thinking, which was rapidly gaining ground in the natural sciences—polygenetic thinkers, in rejecting the theory of descent, were becoming more and more distanced from the scientific mainstream. But as one historian has noted, the diminishing influence of polygenetic science did not result in a tempering of racist thinking in postbellum America: “In America as in Europe concepts of race inferiority existed in both monogenist and polygenist schools... [and] the monogenists, despite their insistence on environmental change through time, were no more favorable to the Negro, except in their remote theoretical stance.”⁴

Josiah Nott’s efforts to categorize the various races followed the work of Louis Agassiz, who had hoped to “map them off into those great groups of proximate races

³ J.C. Nott and Geo. R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1855), 60.

⁴ John S. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995 [1971]), 77.

appertaining to the zoological provinces into which the earth is naturally divided.”⁵ Nott and Agassiz mapped the races spatially, whereas monogenetic thinkers ordered the races along temporal-historic lines, with levels of inferiority and superiority corresponding to degrees of evolutionary progress made through time. But both positions iterated the view of the other, and neither credited the non-white races as having made any significant contribution to the annals human history. Africans in Nott’s science “have remained where history first found them,” and that in the “long duration of Negro life, not a single civilization, spontaneous or borrowed, has existed, to adorn its gloomy past.”⁶ But the belief that African peoples were locked forever in a kind of cultural and intellectual stasis was also common in monogenetic thought.⁷ The theory of unitary creation may have found a common parent in the ancestry of all the races, but that did not render the siblings equal.

The primary difference between the two theories was the point at which racial variation was thought to occur. Polygenists envisioned racial difference as being included in the original constitution of distinct types of man, and racial inferiority was the result of separate and unequal creations. Monogenists, on the other hand, thought that racial difference became more and more pronounced over the course of time—all racial stocks had originated from the same family, but as members of this family were separated from one another each took their own evolutionary paths; some evolved into new and more advanced racial forms, while others remained lowly. Both positions regarded non-European populations as unprogressive, existing in evolutionary moments that Europeans had long passed. The debate between monogenists and polygenists may have been of

⁵ Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 87.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

scientific or theological interest, but the victory of one school over the other made little difference in terms of how races were actually treated—both theories contained within them ideologies that justified racist thinking and hegemonic practices. The shift from one school to the other, then, was more academic than political, and the racial program espoused by each theory was essentially the same: a scientific explanation of, and thus justification for, racial inequality. “There will not seem, in the end, to be very much to choose between monogenism and polygenism,” writes Menand. “Both assume the existence of deeply ingrained racial differences, and both are hierarchical.”⁸

Writing long after the debate between single or multiple creations had been settled, monogenists such as Daniel Brinton still sounded very much like their old polygenist foes. Brinton extolled the West’s imperial program of global conquest and thought that it had been the West’s particular evolutionary destiny to gain supremacy over all other races, which explained why Europe had extended control over one-third of the world’s population: “No nation and no race of other lineage dare withstand an attack or disobey an order from a leading European power. Africa and Asia are dismembered and parceled out at London, Berlin and St. Petersburg, and no one dreams of asking the consent of the inhabitants of those continents.” For Brinton, this was “astonishing progress.”⁹ Perhaps the finer points of scientific doctrine made little difference in the end: how different in consequence was Brinton’s monogenetic thinking from Nott’s polygenism? Nott’s read on imperial destiny was essentially the same as Brinton’s—conquest was the destiny of the Western races who “have been assigned, in all ages, the largest brains and the most powerful intellect; *theirs* is the mission of extending and

⁸ Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 104.

⁹ Daniel G. Brinton, *Races and Peoples: Lectures on the Science of Ethnography*. (New York: N.D.C. Hodges, 1890), 298.

perfecting civilization—they are by nature ambitious, daring, domineering, and reckless of danger—impelled by an irresistible instinct, they visit all climes, regardless of difficulties.”¹⁰ With regards to European colonization, Brinton and Nott, though representing two very distinct schools of science, justified the colonial project as an inevitable chapter in the evolution of the races.

Some modern scholars contend that Western science has traditionally been built upon racist premises that permeate its very core. “As a matter of fact,” writes one, “far from being an objective, ideology-free domain, modern Western science was deeply implicated in the construction of racist ways of thinking about human beings and the differences between them.”¹¹ Consequently, scientific studies of race conducted by Westerners were necessarily tainted—ideological racism resulted in empirical racism, which tarnished attempts to understand racial difference. In a context so thick with prejudices and predispositions, the displacement of one brand of race science over another may have altered the foundation on which racial difference was justified, but did not radically affect previously held prejudices.

Polygenetic racism faded in the age of Darwin, but monogenetic racism flourished. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the number of institutions built on racist thinking multiplied. The sanctioned enslavement of African peoples in America had ended, but across the globe the oppression of non-Europeans continued and expanded under the colonial project. Monogenetic thinking brought theories of racial inequality up to speed with the political and scientific developments of the day, and ensured that hegemonic institutions would retain rationales that remained empirically sound in the

¹⁰ Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, 67.

¹¹ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 60-1.

wake of scientific change and politically viable under new institutional arrangements. Traditional justifications for racially exploitative practices had become dated in light of Darwinian science and colonial expansion, requiring the reformulation of old prejudices to meet new criteria.

Of all of the nineteenth-century disciplines that answered this challenge, none was more important than anthropology, which imported the major scientific advancements of the day, including the theories of monogenetic development and natural selection, to build a scientifically sound basis for racial exploitation in the colonies. Anthropology fused the biological and human sciences, and used advancements in the natural sciences to formulate theories of social, cultural, and intellectual evolution. It was becoming increasingly common in nineteenth-century academia to consolidate “biological and social evolutionary thinking,” a development particularly significant in the history of anthropology because “biological evolutionism attributed the principle of human progress to physiological and natural laws rather than metaphysical, economic, or socio-cultural phenomena *per se*.”¹² As was seen in Chapter One, the nineteenth-century disciplines explained change through and dynamic and progressive development; in the anthropological context, racial development was no longer regarded as the unfolding of a preordained plan of racial destiny, but as the result of natural forces acting upon populations in different ways, effecting changes not only in physical structure, but in social and intellectual life as well.

Anthropology became an established professional discipline during the period of colonial expansion, replete with institutional apparatuses required for the collection and

¹² Fuyuki Kurasawa, “A Requiem for the ‘Primitive,’” *History of the Human Sciences* 15 (No. 3, 2002), 8-9.

dissemination of knowledge, such as learned societies, scholarly publications, and academic chairs. As Edward Said notes, colonial ethnography “carved out a field of study and a family of ideas which in turn could form a community of scholars whose lineage, traditions, and ambitions were at once internal to the field and external enough for general prestige.”¹³ European infiltration of the “dark continents” provided Westerners with total access to “savage peoples,” allowing for the comprehensive study of much of the world’s population. But the very circumstances under which the Western anthropologist and imperial subject met rendered the encounter problematic. As one historian of anthropology has written:

But anthropology is also rooted in an unequal power encounter between the West and Third World...It is this encounter that gives the West access to cultural and historical information about the societies it has progressively dominated, and thus not only generates a certain kind of universal understanding, but also re-enforces the inequalities in capacity between the European and the non-European worlds.¹⁴

That the examination and study of racial difference occurred in a repressive context hindered the development of an objective understanding of racial difference, and did nothing whatsoever to dispel racial prejudices that Westerners had brought from home.

Few anthropologists thought that methodological objectivity required an acceptance of racial equality. And the business of measuring racial difference had far-reaching consequences for the colonial project, and many anthropologists were conscious of the fact that their discipline was necessarily politicized by the moment’s exigencies. The British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor, an eminent member of the field, was himself aware of the anthropological enterprise’s political nature:

¹³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 122.

¹⁴ Talad Asal, “Introduction,” in Talad Asal, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, (New York: Humanity Books, 1973), 16.

It is only within modern times that the distinctions among races have been worked out by scientific methods. Yet since early ages, race has attracted notice from its connexion with the political questions of countryman or foreigner, conqueror or conquered, freeman or slave, and in consequence its marks have been watched with jealous accuracy.¹⁵

Studies of racial difference, then, occurred in an environment where the investigator had to continually justify his position of dominance—proof of racial inferiority, gained through systematic observation, reinforced the original colonial position: that Westerners were superior and justified in their conquest of peoples who required outside agents to govern them. Though a civilian, the anthropologist was an agent of colonial power and held a prominent rank in the colonizing forces. As historians of anthropology Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink have demonstrated, the anthropologist's work played an integral role in the execution of colonial power:

Both anthropologists and (former) administrators thought the institutionalization of anthropology should take place within the triangle of academic anthropology, colonial administration, and 'subject peoples': anthropologists were to teach administrators, and administrators were to do research among 'subject peoples' on the basis of this training.¹⁶

In framing a new system of anthropological thought that would meet the needs of the colonial project, while at the same time incorporating advancements in the natural sciences, colonial anthropologists came to rely heavily on the work of Darwin and other evolutionary thinkers. Historian of anthropology George W. Stocking noted that the discipline was "part of the nineteenth-century positivist incarnation of the progressivist tradition."¹⁷ In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin applied the theory of descent to the human

¹⁵ Edward B. Tylor, *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1906 [1881]), 3.

¹⁶ Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink, "Introduction: Locating the Colonial Subjects of Anthropology," in Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink, eds., *Colonial Subjects: Essays on the Practical History of Anthropology* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 37.

¹⁷ George W. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 76.

sphere and hoped that it would allow future scholars to “trace a perfect gradation from the mind of an utter idiot, lower than that of an animal low in the scale, to the mind of a Newton.”¹⁸ Darwin’s own position on the colonial project was influenced by his studies in biology, and he regarded the process of imperial conquest as a manifestation of the theory of natural selection: dominant races conquered those possessing lower levels of intellectual and cultural development. “The grade of their civilisation seems to be a most important element in the success of competing nations,” he wrote.¹⁹ The process worked much the same way in the natural world, where animals better suited to meet environmental challenges won out over animals that had not sufficiently adapted. In this respect, animals and people operated in accordance with the same laws—man, noted Darwin, had no immunity from the forces of natural selection, and had “he not been subjected during primeval times to natural selection, assuredly he would never have attained to his present rank.”²⁰ While watching the struggles occurring in the colonial world between Europeans and their subjects, Darwin assumed that he was witnessing the latest chapter in the history of evolution:

At the present day civilised nations are everywhere supplanting barbarous nations, excepting where the climate opposes a deadly barrier; and they succeed mainly, though not exclusively, through their arts, which are the products of the intellect. It is, therefore, highly probable that with mankind the intellectual faculties have been mainly and gradually perfected through natural selection...²¹

The evolutionary strides made by one race, Darwin continued, could exact a heavy toll on the less advanced races across the globe: “At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and

¹⁸ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004 [1879]), 151.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 212.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

replace, the savage races throughout the world.”²² The study of mankind, when coupled with the theory of natural selection, could become an immensely powerful and dangerous tool, for it justified racial conquest *and* the extinction of whole populations.²³

Evolutionary thinking provided the sense that world affairs were taking their inevitable course, determined as they were by natural laws. The advancement of the European colonial project depended on the continued collapse of non-European societies, and the theory of natural selection explained both advancement and collapse as natural processes—the idea that both were the natural and ineluctable products of evolution provided a revised moral justification for the institutionalization of racist practices. Racial destiny was explained scientifically, with the position of any given race in the colonial equation determined by its place on an evolutionary scale formulated by anthropologists.

Edward B. Tylor imported the theory of natural selection into his anthropological hypothesis, and found it to be a useful tool in his attempt to track the development of human civilization throughout the course of history. Together, monogenetic thought and the theory of natural selection comprised a methodology that anthropologists thought capable of producing a linear map of human history. Monogenism linked the races into a single family, and Darwinism ordered those races along evolutionary lines. It should be noted that the point of anthropological study in the nineteenth century lay not in understanding cultures *per se*, as twentieth-century studies would, but in understanding how distinct cultures formed a relational whole. The study of races yielded valuable results only when the anthropologist’s research data could be collated into a relational

²² Ibid., 183.

²³ The Italian historian Enzo Traverso has written a fascinating book that examines the influence that colonial science had on the Holocaust. Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence* (New York: The New Press, 2003), 54-63.

scheme that ordered groups according to evolutionary advancement, the goal being to assemble a complete historical map of humankind. Accordingly, the anthropologist's subjects were not regarded as independently existing entities with unique cultural practices deserving respect and appreciation, but as pieces of a larger evolutionary puzzle.

The process of mapping humanity occurred from the top down; as George W. Stocking has written, anthropologists “reason[ed] downward from the civilized European to the savage.”²⁴ Primitive cultures were seen as literal representations of the early stages of civilized cultures—snapshots of civilization's childhood, so to speak, preserved among living cultures. “In judging how mankind may have once lived,” wrote Tylor, “it is also a great help to observe how they are actually found living. Human life may be roughly classed into three great stages, Savage, Barbaric, Civilized.”²⁵ He continued:

So far as the evidence goes, it seems that civilization has actually grown up in the world through these three stages, so that to look at a savage of the Brazilian forests, a barbarous New Zealander or Dahoman, and a civilized European, may be the student's best guide to understanding the progress of civilization...²⁶

Looked at in this way, the black, brown, yellow, and white men whom we have supposed ourselves examining on the quays, *are living records of the remote past*, every Chinese and Negro bearing in his face evidence of the antiquity of man.²⁷

For Tylor primitives represented “the starting point of progressive development, the stages of which could be reconstructed by comparing the various forms of culture coexisting in the present world or preserved in the historical or archeological record.”²⁸

²⁴ Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 76.

²⁵ Tylor, *Anthropology*, 23.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7. My emphasis.

²⁸ George W. Stocking Jr., *Delimiting Anthropology: Occasional Essays and Reflections* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 110.

Accordingly, Tylor's writings, in Stocking's words, "can be seen as an effort to complement the Darwinian argument by providing a developmental cultural chain that would take the place of otherwise 'missing links' in the evolutionary argument."²⁹

Genetic anthropology, or the practice of sorting civilizations and races according to evolutionary standing, constituted a kind of "evolutionary discrimination" in which conquered races were necessarily seen as incomplete or *less-than*.³⁰ In all aspects of human existence, indigenous peoples were seen to lag behind Europeans. Primitives inhabited evolutionary moments that Europeans had passed long ago, the argument went, and that meant that non-European races lacked all the characteristics possessed by an evolved and civilized people. Primitive culture, so understood, was deficient, and the races regarded by anthropologists as "lower" had experienced only *partial* development—evolution, for such groups, had been curtailed. Thus the notion of racial or cultural progress was linked to the accomplishments of Western civilization, the highest manifestation of man's evolutionary potential. The West became a universalized standard upon which the progress and advancement of all others was gauged; degrees of proximity to and from this standard determined evolutionary standing and enabled anthropologists to sort groups of people into Tylor's categories of primitive, barbaric, and civilized. As Tylor himself wrote:

The educated world of Europe and America practically settles a standard by simply placing its own nations at one end of the social series and savage tribes at the other, arranging the rest of mankind between these limits according as they correspond more closely to savage or to cultured life.³¹

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 109.

³¹ E.B. Tylor, *The Origins of Culture: Primitive Culture, Volume One* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958 [1871]), 26.

Tylor's method for determining racial or cultural progress relied on the detection of the "absence or presence." In essence, Tylor was interested in measuring *what wasn't there* more than in studying the actual accomplishments or practices of a racial or cultural group. He sought to determine which Western behaviors, customs, and social practices were lacking in primitive societies—a more negative methodology can scarcely be imagined. To begin, Tylor compiled an inventory of characteristics commonly found among civilized peoples and organized them into general categories such as "metal-working, manufacture of implements and vessels, agriculture, architecture, &c., the extent of scientific knowledge, the definiteness of moral principles, the condition of religious belief and ceremony, the degree of social and political organization, and so forth."³² He then determined which of these were lacking and which, if any, were present. The outcome of Tylor's evaluation of any one group depended on how that group measured up against his yardstick of civilized traits. The behaviors and customs of a people were seldom understood as constitutive parts of a social whole that provided meaning and a sense of belonging for its members. Rather, they were understood as imperfect and underdeveloped practices that could be explained by a group's low evolutionary standing. Tylor's method was little more than a logic of deficiency, a logic that rendered non-European peoples just that, non-European, incomplete, and backwards.

Tylor's method provided a new angle from which primitive practices could be analyzed. Customs, such as the belief that magical forces caused natural phenomena, were not understood in terms of the value that groups derived from them, but as evolutionary imperfections. The belief in magic, prevalent among the "lower" races, was not a practice to be studied, but an affliction to be diagnosed: susceptibility to magical

³² Ibid., 26-27.

explanations was a symptom of one's failure to understand the principles of causation. The application of such cold logic to the examination of supernatural belief reduced the spiritual systems of entire cultures to nothing more than epistemological flaws. Unevolved thinking manifested itself in superstitions, most of which Western science had long since dispensed with.³³ This logic of deficiency was common among anthropologists of Tylor's day, who often considered a culture's most notable characteristics to be those that were absent. Commenting on Australian aborigines, John Lubbock remarked that, "No single fact, perhaps, gives us a more vivid idea of the mental condition of these miserable savages, than the observation that they cannot count their own fingers."³⁴ Another noticed that, "Amongst the Tshi-speaking tribes [of Africa], as amongst most uncivilised peoples, love, as understood by the people of Europe, has no existence. There is here no romantic sentiment, and the relation between the sexes is ordinarily quite passionless."³⁵ Examples of this kind abound in the anthropological literature of the day, and it constituted the dominant method for analyzing cultural and racial progress.

Non-European races fell below the standards that Western anthropologists had themselves set and, consequently, were seen as inferior and incomplete. Evolutionary thinking added a scientific basis to the argument, and positioned those races in closer proximity to the beginnings of human history, where thought, culture, and social organization were expressed in only the most rudimentary ways. As noted in the last chapter, these ideas oftentimes led anthropologists to regard primitives as "childlike"—

³³ Ibid., 115-116.

³⁴ John Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times: As Illustrated by Ancient Remains and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages* (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1869), 437.

³⁵ A. B. Ellis, *The Tshi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Languages, Etc.* (Oosterhout, The Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1966 [1887]), 285.

both groups were considered to be undeveloped and incomplete. In Herbert Spencer's evolutionary treatment of human civilization, differences between savage and civilized races were synonymous with "the contrast between the child and the adult" in Western lands.³⁶ Spencer found countless similarities between children and savages: not only did the two groups share important physiological similarities (a point explored in Chapter One), but both were impulsive, extremely emotional, mirthful, mimetic, superstitious, inarticulate in speech, and unable grasp difficult concepts. John Lubbock noted that, "Savages have often been likened to children, and the comparison is not only correct but also highly instructive."³⁷ Like children, Lubbock found savages to lack steadiness of purpose, to have intense and unpredictable emotional outbursts, and to possess a general level of "thoughtlessness and impulsiveness"; those and other observations led him to conclude "savages have the character of children with the passions and strength of men."³⁸ And Tylor concluded from his studies, "Savage moral standards are real enough, but they are far looser and weaker than ours. We may, I think, apply the often-repeated comparison of savages to children as fairly to their moral as to their intellectual condition."³⁹ In some cases, the title of one's work could say it all, as was the case with Leo Frobenius' *The Childhood of Man: A Popular Account of the Lives, Customs and Thoughts of the Primitive Races*.⁴⁰

The conflation of savagery and childhood had a dramatic impact on the attitudes that Westerners had toward their own children, a point to be explored later in this chapter.

³⁶ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology, Volume One* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1892), 58.

³⁷ Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times*, 558.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 560.

³⁹ Tylor, *The Origins of Culture*, 31.

⁴⁰ Leo Frobenius, *The Childhood of Man: A Popular Account of the Lives, Customs and Thoughts of the Primitive Races* (London: Seeley and Company Limited, 1909 [1901]).

But it also influenced Western perceptions of non-Western people. The idea that non-Westerners were childlike not only reinforced racist thinking but justified the paternalistic control of colonized peoples. Anthropological research, with its proclamation that savages and children were in many ways the same, was used by members of colonial administrations as proof that their subjects were incapable of expressing their own interests or satisfying their own needs—self-determination for such people made as little sense as granting full autonomy to children.

Are not the Aborigines of this colony the children of our Government? Are we not all happy but they? And are they not miserable? Can they raise themselves from this sad condition? Or do they not claim our assistance? And shall that assistance be denied? ... The Aborigines demand our protection. They are the most helpless members, and being such have a peculiar claim upon us all, to extend every aid in our power, as well in relation to their necessities as to those enlightening means which shall at last introduce them from the chilling rigours of the forest into the same delightful temperature which we enjoy.⁴¹

Such pronouncements from respected academic men who relied on trusted scientific methodologies transformed casual prejudice into scientific fact; the consequence of such “discoveries” was the entrenchment of colonial power and the systematic oppression of entire populations who were regarded as mere children, unable to govern themselves and thus requiring complete oversight.

The institutional manifestations of this kind of thinking varied. Nicholas Thomas, in his study of missionary work in Fiji, discovered that religious workers regarded natives as “infants” caught in a “protosocial condition from which Christian manhood and womanhood are imagined to emerge.”⁴² With natives perceived in this light, “missionary work employed and enacted the notions of infantilization and quasi-familial hierarchy in

⁴¹ Quoted in James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians; or, The Black War of Van Diemen's Land* (New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1970 [1870]), 48.

⁴² Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, 133.

a far more thorough way than any other colonial project...for the missionaries it was as if children were being brought up and socialized for the first time.”⁴³ Matters were less compassionate in British India, especially after the mutiny of 1857, as historian Bernard S. Cohn has discovered:

One of the results of the Mutiny was to rigidify the already considerable differences between Indians and British. The Indians, seen by the British in the first half of the nineteenth century as misguided children, had been revealed by their actions in 1857-1859 to be treacherous and unchangeable. Outwardly they might conform to the sahib's expectations, but they could never be trusted. At any time their deep-seated, irrational superstitions could break forth in violence and overturn all the painful efforts of the conquerors to lead them in proper directions...Henceforth, the British should rule in an “oriental manner,” with strength and with the expectation of instant obedience.⁴⁴

Within the savage-as-child paradigm, the treatment of colonized peoples could take different forms, depending on circumstance. If the natives proved docile and good-natured, as Thomas' missionaries thought, then a benign paternalism could be used to govern them; if they proved recalcitrant and unyielding, as Cohn's research indicated, then colonial power would demand from its subjects discipline and obedience. Often colonial rationales were expressed in pedagogical terms, a sure signal that colonized peoples were regarded as children, while the colonizers regarded themselves as benevolent teachers. As one contemporary noted: Europe “has sent thither a high-minded army of men, acting nearly always from noble and unselfish motives, to raise the African from his brutish ignorance to a glimpse of better things.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁴ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 124-125.

⁴⁵ Harry H. Johnston, *A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Races* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905 [1899]), 146.

Edward Said linked anthropological knowledge with power, noting that to have “knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it.”⁴⁶ And the authority that colonizers exercised over their subjects bore striking resemblance to the kind employed by Western parents and teachers. Child-rearing and pedagogical practices in the West and the policies of colonial administration shared a similar premise: each regarded their charges as being incapable of looking after themselves; like children, “subject races did not have it in them to know what was good for them.”⁴⁷

The savage-as-child metaphor provides insight into the kinds of strategies employed by European powers when governing their colonial settlements. But it is also instructive in examining Western attitudes toward their own young—the flow of anthropological knowledge was not unidirectional, leading only from metropolis to colony. Indeed, ideas about race and childhood, while manufactured and employed to great effect to the colonial realm proper, were also imported into the non-colonized lands of Europe and America, where their influence carried great weight. “Hence, what is required is a historiography of primitiveness in various fields of knowledge,” writes one scholar, “a tracing of its contingent and variable representations as well as of the roles which they have played in Western modernity’s self-conception.”⁴⁸ For the purposes of this study, that requires demonstrating the ways in which ideas of primitiveness and savagery influenced the development of ideas about childhood and education.

On the one hand, as has been demonstrated, anthropological studies justified and gave scientific credence to “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority” over the indigenous people of colonized lands. At the same time, however,

⁴⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, 32.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁸ Kurasawa, “A Requiem for the Primitive,” 4.

anthropological authority extended beyond the colonial realm, influencing not only attitudes toward other races, but affecting the ways in which Westerners understood their own race. Envisioning the primitive condition as the historical antecedent for Western civilization transformed certain cultures into tools for Western self-understanding. The point is made by Said, who claimed that ethnographic research always included a “process of conversion,” an act that transformed the strange into the familiar:

It is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness; therefore cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit if the receiver, they ought to be. To the Westerner, however, the Oriental was always *like* some aspect of the West...the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else...⁴⁹

The theory of monogenetic evolution allowed anthropologists to convert savages and primitives into reflections of the Westerner’s historical past and, in doing so, each became something entirely new. The study of races, cultures, and civilizations had little value independently, for, as Said mentions, such endeavors would have led to a mere chronicling of strangeness. But when strangeness was converted into familiarity, comparative studies proved valuable—they taught Westerners about themselves, which, in the end, was the primary goal of anthropology. As one contemporary noted: “It is a mere commonplace that savages are children, and must be treated as such. Perhaps it is less generally recognized that children are savages, and can only by training be brought up to the level of contemporary civilization.”⁵⁰ Non-European races, therefore, were always studied in relation to the West, and none ever stood on its own.

⁴⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, 3; 67.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Kathryn Castle, *Britannia’s Children: Reading Colonialism Through Children’s Books and Magazines* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 93.

Anthropologists of Tylor's persuasion considered the study of cultures meaningful only insofar as those cultures offered insight into the evolutionary history of Western man. Savages, primitives, or barbarians did not exist as independent beings who crafted their own historical destiny, but as artifacts representing what Western man once was. Evolutionary thinking, when applied to races, civilizations, and cultures, transformed the study of non-European peoples into the study of *pre-European* peoples. For Said, anthropological study does not contribute to the development of a more sophisticated or compassionate understanding of non-European peoples, but serves instead as a kind of looking glass that Westerners used to view themselves, offering a glimpse into one's own racial childhood. In essence, anthropology transformed its subjects into "empty canvases onto which to project the fantasies and nightmares of the modern West."⁵¹

Of all the fantasies projected onto non-European peoples, one of the most powerful was the notion that they were the developmental equivalents of children. The idea was of especial import to G. Stanley Hall, who wrote that "what we call low races are not weeds in the human garden, but are essentially children and adolescents in soul, with the same good and bad qualities and needing the same kind of study and adjustment."⁵²

⁵¹ Kurasawa, "A Requiem for the Primitive," 16.

⁵² G. Stanley Hall, "Civilization and Savagery," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 17 (1903), 11.

II. “Elsewhere”: Locating the Child/Savage in Space and Time

During the first half of the nineteenth century the idea that children resembled savages was largely metaphorical and was applied to only certain segments of the young population; it was primarily a rhetorical strategy employed by urban reformers who considered “idle” street children to be dangerous elements of civilized society. As historian of childhood Hugh Cunningham writes, during the 1830s “children of the street, their numbers ever swelling, seemed to have forms of group behavior which both gave them solidarity and cut them off from the norms of civilization; they were savages.”⁵³ The conflation of children and savages was not a scientific position, as it would become later in the century, but a literary device, an analogy used to excite emotion and to catalyze public action.

The shift from metaphor and hyperbole to scientific “fact” occurred when those interested in child development merged monogenetic thinking with the theories of evolution and recapitulation, creating an argument for child development that rested on three premises: (1) humankind, though racially heterogeneous, had descended from the same ancestral stock; (2) the development of racial difference was a linear process, where ever-higher racial variations emerged from lower ones; (3) the evolutionary development of the race must necessarily be repeated in the development of the individual.

The third premise—expressed in the theory of recapitulation—was of the utmost importance in G. Stanley Hall’s theory of adolescent development, and he considered the

⁵³ Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood Since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 104.

history of racial development to be indispensable in understanding individual development. As he wrote in *Adolescence*, “facts in both the history of development of the race and in that of the individual have their chief value as those of one series shed light on those of the others.”⁵⁴ Hall’s theory of adolescent recapitulation provides a clear example of Edward Said’s “process of conversion” at work: the history, characteristics, and experiences of racial groups were taken from their original contexts and transformed into something else. As Western scientists converted primitives and savages into children, they transformed the exotic and unfamiliar into something that was exceptionally common. Few people had any direct experience with primitive cultures, but most people had interacted with children. By endorsing this analogy, anthropologists provided the masses with an image of savagery that was simple and accessible, while, at the same time, indirectly advocating a new conception of childhood itself.

As the leader of a movement that sought to promote this new view of childhood, G. Stanley Hall was its most important and influential champion. As president of Clark University, Hall gathered a number of like-minded scholars who supported the application of the recapitulatory theory to educational and developmental problems; as editor of the *Pedagogical Seminary* he developed an academic journal that was based on the theory; as the leader of the child study movement he helped to disseminate the ideas to the rest of the educational world; and as the author of *Adolescence* he lent scientific credence to an understanding of young people that was based on anthropological generalizations. Through his work, Hall reassigned the attributes and characteristics of race to the realm of individual development, and to the sphere of adolescent development in particular. As a result, racial thinking increasingly played a more vital role in how

⁵⁴ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, 139.

Westerners conceived of their own children: The “child and the race are each keys to the other,” wrote Hall.⁵⁵ In *Adolescence*, then, Hall employed the findings of anthropological studies to provide Westerners with “a precious kind of self-knowledge.” Indeed, the very *raison d’être* of anthropological studies was utilitarian; their “purpose” was to contribute to a deeper Western self-understanding. Consequently, primitives and savages were “useful” only insofar as they served this end: “If primitive races become extinct, they will take out of the world with them so much power of sympathetic appreciation of youth in its early stages that we may well be appalled for the future of the young.”⁵⁶

The theory of recapitulation maintained that all individuals passed through the stages of primitiveness and savagery on the path to maturation, a premise that led recapitulatory scholars to rely heavily on the findings of evolutionary anthropology. Just as biological recapitulationists believed that the developing embryo had to follow the established course of physiological history, social recapitulationists thought that the emerging *social* creature had to pass through each of the major stages of man’s social development. Herbert Spencer made the point prior to the publication of Hall’s

Adolescence:

For on the hypothesis of evolution, the civilised man, passing through phases representing the phases passed through by the race, will, early in life, betray this impulsiveness which the early race had. The saying that the savage has the mind of a child with the passions of a man (or, rather, has adult passions which act in a childish manner) possesses a deeper meaning than appears. There is a relationship between the two natures such that, allowing for differences of kind and degree in emotions, we may regard the co-ordination of them in the child as analogous to the co-ordination of the primitive man.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., viii.

⁵⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 726.

⁵⁷ Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology, Volume One*, 58-59.

Hall took Spencer's idea of coordination very seriously and used it to make the stages of child development synonymous with past epochs of human history:

The years from about eight to twelve constitute an unique period of human life...Reason, true morality, religion, sympathy, love, and esthetic enjoyment are but very slightly developed. Everything, in short, suggests the culmination of one stage of life as if it thus represented what was once, and for a very protracted and relatively stationary period, the age of maturity in some remote, perhaps pigmoid, stage of human evolution, when in a warm climate the young of our species once shifted for themselves independently of further parental aid.⁵⁸

Adolescence is a new birth, for the higher and more completely human traits are now born. The qualities of body and soul that now emerge are far newer. The child comes from and harks back to a remoter past; the adolescent is neo-atavistic, and in him the later acquisitions of the race slowly become prepotent.⁵⁹

These ideas were not borrowed from Spencer alone, and Hall had access to a variety of sympathetic sources that lent support to his evolutionary argument. The theory of recapitulation frequently appeared in the anthropological treatises from which he drew. In John Lubbock, for example, Hall found an amenable ally: "the life of each individual is an epitome of the history of the race, and the gradual development of the child illustrates that of the species. Hence the importance of the similarity between savages and children."⁶⁰

Evolutionary anthropologists regarded primitive and savage groups as living fossils, and recapitulatory scientists saw children in the same light—both were representative of human history in its early stages. Combined, these theories provided historically minded scholars with access to two different "living records," to use Tylor's terminology. In effect, the theory of recapitulation introduced an entirely new "temporal perspective" into the study of children by positioning them in a historico-developmental

⁵⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, ix-x.

⁵⁹ Ibid., xiii.

⁶⁰ Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times*, 558.

scheme that divested them of their relationship with the present—primitives did not exist in the “now,” but in the past.⁶¹ Likewise, this perspective envisioned children not as creatures in harmony with the Western present, but as representations of epochs past. Thus, within Hall’s theory of development, Said’s “process of conversion” worked upon two distinct groups simultaneously, and each was converted into something else: savages became children and children, savages. Each epitomized the other, and both were representative of early man. The process altered the temporal status of both child and primitive—through this conversion, both were excluded from the present and relegated to the past. Children and primitives, then, were converted not only into different forms but were transferred to different places as well. Evolutionary and recapitulatory sciences were powerfully transformative and altered popular perceptions of childhood and primitiveness by conflating them into a single category.

According to historian of anthropology Johannes Fabian, anthropology’s “exercise of knowledge was projected as the filling of spaces or slots in a table, or the marking of points in a system of coordinates in which all possible knowledge could be placed.”⁶² For Fabian, one of the most crucial aspects of this process was the creation of a temporal framework that ordered and sorted peoples based on their perceived evolutionary standing in relation to the whole of human history. Here, anthropology was complicit:

It promoted a scheme in terms of which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time—some upstream, others downstream...A discourse employing such terms as primitive, savage...does not think, or observe, or critically study, the “primitive”; it thinks,

⁶¹ G. Stanley Hall, “Evolution and Psychology,” in *Fifty Years of Darwinism: Modern Aspects of Evolution, Centennial Addresses in Honor of Charles Darwin* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909), 264.

⁶² Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 8.

observes, studies *in terms* of the primitive. *Primitive* being essentially a temporal concept, is a category, not an object, of Western thought.⁶³

The passage of time accounted for the differences between primitive and civilized groups—whereas one group remained stuck in a particular historical period, the other had moved forward, becoming temporally distanced from the primitive or savage type. “What makes the savage significant to the evolutionist’s Time is that he lives in another Time,” leading to what Fabian calls the “denial of coevalness”: the “persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse.”⁶⁴

The practice of positioning non-European groups within historical stages in the evolutionary history of mankind not only detached those groups from the present, but it rendered them ahistorical. Primitives and savages were regarded as mere snapshots, static and unchanging historical representations, preserved through time by the limits of their own evolutionary potential. Indeed, those unfortunate groups were thought to have reached the terminal point of evolution, and were generally considered incapable of evolving into higher forms. Anthropologists thought that primitive and savage civilizations lacked forward momentum, which meant that they had no histories of their own—without progress there was no history, as history was thought to be the record of progressive change experienced by a people.

E.B. Tylor’s study on the aboriginal Tasmanians illustrates the point: “It seems more likely to consider that in their remote corner of the globe they may have gone on little changed from early ages, so as to have remained to our day living representatives of

⁶³ Ibid., 17-18.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 27; 31.

the early Stone Age, left behind in industrial development even by the ancient tribes of the Somme and the Ouse.”⁶⁵ Rather than studying the Tasmanian people in and of themselves, for the benefit of understanding another culture, Tylor studied them in relation to Western civilization. The value of the study was that it illustrated for Westerners what *they* would have looked like during the Stone Age—the Tasmanians had been preserved, a static race with no real future and no real past, merely a living fossil.

Anthropologists who operated in the colonial realm frequently regarded their subjects as ahistorical beings—not only were primitives thought to inhabit ancient epochs, but they were also thought to experience only the present moment, lacking a historical consciousness altogether. Western anthropologists determined whether or not any given culture possessed a history by applying the criteria of progress and change, and since primitive cultures appeared to be stagnant, they were thought to have no history. But other criteria existed as well, namely the ability to reflect upon one’s past. And primitive peoples were frequently thought to lack any historical sense of time whatsoever. R.H. Codrington noted in his study of the Melanesian people that they were a people unaware of any connection with the past, and when observing the Melanesians

the enquirer seeks in vain for antiquity; the memory of the past perishes quickly where all things soon pass away, where every building soon decays, where life is short, and no marked change of seasons makes people count by longer measures of time than months. While any one lives who remembers some famous man of the past his fame lingers, but it dies with the personal remembrance; a man’s ancestry goes back so far as living memory extends; historical tradition can hardly be said to exist.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ E.B. Tylor, “On the Tasmanians as Representative of Paleolithic Man,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 23 (1894), 148-149.

⁶⁶ R.H. Codrington, *The Melanesians: Studies in Their Anthropology and Folk-Lore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891), 47-48.

H. Hesketh Prichard, who studied the aboriginal peoples of the Patagonian region, wrote:

“It may well be judged that this race have no history.”⁶⁷ Guy Burrows, in his study of tribes in the Congo, noted that the “low state of [the natives’] mental development is shown by the following facts: they have no regard for time nor have they any records of the past, traditional or otherwise... They live simply in the present and for the present. What has happened is speedily forgotten.”⁶⁸ Another anthropologist shared a similar opinion on the historical consciousness of the Congolese people:

Among the native tribes of the Congo basin there exists no form of history. There is no written language; no tradition of the past; and no indication of an attempt, on the part of the natives, to perpetuate any epoch in their lives by means of monumental erections.⁶⁹

Primitives “do not seem to calculate long periods of time at all,” wrote one anthropologist in his study of the Solomon Islanders, “one full moon to another is as far as they usually go; and crops come so often and irregularly, that it is impossible to reckon by that standard.”⁷⁰ Another noted that the natives of New Guinea did “not recognize a lunar year or months. There are no ceremonies for the old and new year, nor are there any time-keepers.”⁷¹ Primitives thought of time only in the simplest terms, short and natural periods connected to observable phenomenon, such as lunar cycles or the passing of

⁶⁷ H. Hesketh Prichard, *Through the Heart of Patagonia* (London: William Heinemann, 1902), 90.

⁶⁸ Guy Burrows, “On the Natives of the Upper Welle District of the Belgian Congo,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 28 (No. 1-2, 1899), 37.

⁶⁹ Herbert Ward, “Ethnographical Notes Relating to the Congo Tribes,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 24 (1895), 285.

⁷⁰ Boyle T. Somerville, “Ethnographical Notes in New Georgia, Solomon Islands,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 26 (1897), 404.

⁷¹ Edward Beardsmore, “The Natives of Mowat, Daudai, New Guinea,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 19 (1890), 463.

seasons—only were short cycles of time “recognizable in the childhood of individuals and the races,” whose concepts of time were not historical, but immediate.⁷²

All these cosmic cycles were observed by primitive peoples (though the precession of the equinox was perceived only as a linear movement). The rudest savage regulates his activities and reckons his journeys by suns; all pastoral nomads reckon time by moons, and some develop lunar calendars; the fruit-eater and the forerunner of the farmer reckoned by the march of the seasons, and various groups in different parts of the world developed solar calendars.⁷³

Such cases studies provided grist for broad and sweeping generalizations about the relationship that primitive peoples had with history. The American Spencerian John Fiske wrote, “Of all these barbarian races, we commonly say that they have no history; and by this we mean that throughout long ages they have made no appreciable progress. In a similar sense we should say of a race of monkeys or elephants, that it has no history.”⁷⁴

To understand how the historic sense developed, recapitulatory scholars suggested turning to its earliest manifestations—“How shall we discover its dim psychologic origins; its overgrown path? We must look in two ways—to primitive peoples and to children.”⁷⁵ Neither children nor savages, many thought, possessed the ability to comprehend complex temporal relations. “Childhood cares little for what is remote...unless associated with some personal object,” wrote Hall, adding that young people live “chiefly in the present.”⁷⁶ John Fiske noted that both Australian aborigines and Western children were unable to understand the connection between one’s actions and the effects that those actions might have over long periods of time—indeed, both

⁷² J.W. McGee, “Comparative Chronology,” *American Anthropologist* 5 (October 1892), 329.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ John Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy, Based on the Doctrine of Evolution, Volume II* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1874), 290.

⁷⁵ Mary Sheldon Barnes, “The Historic Sense among Primitive Peoples,” *Studies in Education* 1 (July 1896), 30.

⁷⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 159.

groups struggled to “represent” anything that was not immediately available to sensory experiences.⁷⁷ The intellectual ability of both groups was limited by the fact that each was “bound up with the concrete world,” unable to think beyond the immediate moment. Such shortsightedness was a serious cognitive limitation, as described by Hall in

Adolescence:

If [children’s] psychic operations can be called thought it is of that elementary and half animal kind that consists in imagery. Their talk with each other is of things of present and immediate interest. They lack even the elements of imagination which makes new combinations and is creative because they are dominated by mental pictures of the sensory. Large views that take them afield from the persons and things and acts they know do not appeal to them. Attempts to think rigorously are too hard.⁷⁸

Hall’s project was influenced by studies that demonstrated the lack of a historical consciousness among children, convincing him that young people did not develop a more sophisticated temporal understanding until late-adolescence; prior to this point “the sense of historical time is altogether lacking.”⁷⁹ And only in the latter phases of development was an adolescent thought able to “reason much beyond their experience and environment.”⁸⁰

G. Stanley Hall’s adolescent, like the savages studied by Western anthropologists, existed in an evolutionary moment that was distant from the present, and neither were concerned with matters that did not speak with immediacy.⁸¹ But adolescents were thought to have a major advantage over savages: puberty was only a temporary state of being, whereas primitiveness or savagery was a permanent condition. And while the

⁷⁷ Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, Vol. II, 308.

⁷⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 463-464.

⁷⁹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 482.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 483.

⁸¹ The point is also made by Nancy Lesko, “Past, Present, and Future Conceptions of Adolescence,” *Educational Theory* 46 (Fall 1996): 453-573.

“lower” races had no chance of raising themselves out of the historical periods in which they were doomed to remain, it was possible for Western youth to emerge and progress to the next stage of civilization. Unfortunately, this logic relegated certain races to an existence of permanent childhood. “Lower” races, studies showed, kept apace with Western children in their development, but only to a point. At late-adolescence, development

stops, and, instead of advancing, it is doubtful whether he will fully maintain through middle age what he learnt in youth. In most respects it is clear that the savage *cannot be raised to the level of our civilisation in a single generation...*⁸²

Adolescence constituted a critical phase in one’s development because it marked the point at which civilization diverged from savagery. Ensuring that adolescents received the proper guidance so they could successfully navigate from savage childhood to civilized adulthood was the problem that most concerned Hall. As we shall see in later chapters, much of his pedagogical philosophy focused on this issue. Western youth possessed a potential that lower races lacked, namely the ability to change, progress, and develop into something “better”—in short, children could be educated. This potential separated Western children from their primitive counterparts, if properly nurtured it guaranteed that adolescents would transcend the limits that permanently restrained savages and primitives.⁸³

The “lower” races could develop only so far, thought anthropologists and colonial educators, and though education could prove beneficial in some areas, it was powerless in overcoming the constitutional limits thought to inhere in primitive peoples. Commenting

⁸² Quoted in Alexander Francis Chamberlain, *The Child: A Study in the Evolution of Man* (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1900), 296. Author’s emphasis.

⁸³ See also Gail Bederman, “Teaching our Sons,” in Enora R. Brown and Kenneth J. Saltman, eds., *The Critical Middle School Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2005): 65-86.

on efforts to educate American Negroes who had been transported to Sierra Leone, one anthropologist reported that despite

the expenditure large sums of money by various philanthropic societies, and the exertions of missionaries and teachers of all denominations, [efforts] have failed to do more than impose a mere veneer of civilisation upon the inhabitants of Sierra Leone, and then only upon a small minority, and this after a century of labour.⁸⁴

Another considered efforts to educate Tasmanians:

Bound by the chain of custom, and swayed by the practice of forefathers, it is no less difficult for us to engraft our manners upon the naked savage, than upon the cultivated Hindoo. How could we expect to change the course of thought in such barbarians, when we have succeeded so ill in our teaching elsewhere?⁸⁵

Racial evolution was limited by ancestral legacy, and races regarded as primitive, such as the aborigines of Australia, were destined to remain forever in the child-like state that explorers and anthropologists had originally found them.

Various thinkers offered explanations as to why primitive and savage groups had not evolved, attempting to explain why some groups were unable to change over time while others had met the evolutionary challenges presented throughout history. Most attributed the savage's low evolutionary standing to environmental factors that impeded development and to limits inherent to their internal makeup. Herbert Spencer thought that a variety of factors accounted for the primitive's resistance to change, a number of which were environmental: hot, tropical climates led to indolence and hindered progress; air that was either too dry or too moist sapped one's "vital processes," impeded activity, and rendered a people lazy and stupid; and few natural resources ensured that a people would excel neither agriculturally nor technologically. A number of internal factors contributed

⁸⁴ Ellis, *The Tshi-Speaking Peoples*, 7.

⁸⁵ Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, 341.

to the primitive's lack of progressive change as well, including an inferior physiological makeup and a smaller brain, the inability to reflect upon past experiences, an inherent laziness, and a naturalistic and animistic worldview that left no room for the development of logical explanation or scientific understanding.⁸⁶ Those limits—both external and internal—prevented primitives from evolving into something higher, and explained why they would forever remain mired in low, child-like evolutionary states.

These evolutionary states were, in reality, rather artificial—did these “lower” groups really exist in distant historical epochs, or did Western scientists simply impose temporal categories upon the people they studied? What is clear, however, was that non-European groups, regardless of their historical condition, did live in areas geographically removed from European scientists—thus, anthropologists and their subjects inhabited different temporal *and* spatial realms. Regardless of Fabian's critique of the temporal constraints that anthropologists imposed on their subjects, a very real spatial divide existed between the two groups. That colonized peoples lived far from the colonial metropolis was a source of constant frustration for anthropologists. And few understood the difficulties presented by this divide more than did the Western anthropologist, whose work necessitated confronting harsh environments and insalubrious conditions. Indeed, just as the anthropological project required its members to transport themselves psychologically to different historical epochs, they were also obligated to relocate to distant places—the discipline called on its practitioners to explore, travel, and, sometimes, encounter dangerous elements. The study of adolescents compelled its practitioners to do the same: child studiers not only traveled to the historical past, but they also entered environments and territories that had generally eluded adult eyes.

⁸⁶ Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, Vol. 1, 17-91.

Children often hid in “natural habitats,” haunts and hideouts separated from the adult world, which provided them with their own unsupervised spaces in the midst of adult civilization. Charting this territory would be a necessary step in the study of adolescence:

[The observer] may frequent the haunts of the street urchin, and note how one lad succeeds in conveying an idea to another; note the way in which a motive impels an action; the effort spent to achieve a purpose...in brief, he may discover the way which a live, natural boy perceives, reproduces, apperceives, cognizes, recognizes, interprets, creates.⁸⁷

Anthropologists thought in the same way, and traveled to distant, uncharted regions in order to observe “live” and “natural” primitives uninfluenced by the forces of civilization. G.M. Gooden’s study of the tribe of Northeast India spoke to the difficulties that inhered in anthropological exploration:

The wild hill tracts which till recent years formed the North-Eastern frontier of the Indian Empire are still to some extent an almost unknown land. A dividing barrier between the plains of Assam on the one hand, and of Upper Burma on the other, these Nágá Hills were long known as the abode of fierce and intractable tribes, living in a state of incessant intertribal warfare, and asserting their presence on our border by savage raids; but punitive expeditions and official intercourse left us with a very incomplete knowledge of the people. Fearless with the courage of savage ignorance, they repeatedly resisted and killed officers in frontier work, and *entrenched in a remote hill country they eluded detailed scientific observation.*⁸⁸

An ethnologist who conducted research in the Philippines noted that the natives were “scattered over hundreds of islands, and one who would really learn to know something of the country and its people must travel widely. More than that, he must leave cities and

⁸⁷ Margaret K. Smith, “Child Study in Connection With the Professional Training of Teachers,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1893), 449.

⁸⁸ G.M. Gooden, “Nega and Other Frontier Tribes of North-East India,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 26 (1897), 260-262. My emphasis.

towns behind, and turning from the beaten path, push into the almost unexplored regions where the wild tribes are to be found.”⁸⁹

“Wild tribes” were not a phenomenon occurring only in the untamed climes of colonial territories; in fact, the modern world itself was home to plenty of feral and undomesticated people who lived in the jungles and wildernesses of modern society. Reformers interested in the plight of poor, urban children found difficulties similar to those experienced by anthropologists, and faced the challenge of tracking subjects in a “wild,” uncharted environment. Charles Loring Brace, founder of the New York Children’s Aid Society, had observed “thousands on thousands [of] children in New York who have no assignable home, and ‘flit’ from attic to attic, and cellar to cellar...”⁹⁰ In New York, Brace continued, “was the infamous German ‘Rag-pickers’ Den,’ in Pitt and Willett Streets—double rows of houses, flaunting with dirty banners, and the yards heaped up with bones and refuse, where cholera raged unchecked in its previous invasion. Here the wild life of the children soon made them outcasts and thieves.”⁹¹ Jacob Riis also found savage conditions in the heart of civilization: “The story of inhuman packing of human swarms, of bitter poverty, of landlord greed, of sweeter slavery, of darkness and squalor and misery, which these tenements have to tell, is equaled, I suppose, nowhere in a civilized land.”⁹² Brace and Riis were both frustrated by the fact that children of the underclass, like the primitives studied by Western anthropologists, eluded “detailed observation.”

⁸⁹ Dean C. Worcester, *The Philippine Islands and Their People: A Record of Personal Observation and Experience, with A Short Summary of the More Important Facts in the History of the Archipelago* (New York: MacMillan, 1899), 57.

⁹⁰ Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years’ Work Among Them* (New York: Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 1872), 29.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁹² Jacob A. Riis, *The Children of the Poor* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1892), 36.

G. Stanley Hall borrowed from anthropologists these temporal and spatial structures and used them in his project to link adolescence with savagery. In Hall's mind, both groups lived "elsewhere"—the theory of recapitulation demonstrated that each was removed from the Western present, while the work of anthropologists in the field and reformers in the streets showed that each lived in a wilderness that was neither inviting to outsiders, nor easy to regulate. Hall's great fear was that many adolescents would disappear from view, regressing to an entirely different historical epoch and retreating to an unstructured and unsupervised "wilderness." Like the savage, the adolescent tended toward rootlessness, caused by an instinctual urge to travel and migrate and a deep inner need to be free from the constraints of civilization. Such urges could be dangerous—if given the opportunity, adolescents would prefer to disappear from view and escape the educational regimens that proper development mandated. For Hall, the risks were obvious:

the moment his life becomes migratory all the restraints and possibilities of settled life vanish. It is possible to steal and pass on undiscovered and unsuspected, and to steal again. The vagabond escapes the control of public sentiment, which normally is an external conscience, and having none of his own within him thus lapses into a feral state.⁹³

"It is a chronic illusion to youth that gives 'elsewhere' a special charm," wrote Hall. "Elsewhere" was, for Hall, a psychological condition and an orientation within the real world—a figurative state youth longed for because of atavistic urgings, but also a real place, beyond society's gaze and outside the control of its social mechanisms. Both—temporal and spatial isolation—translated into invisibility. To dwell "elsewhere" was to inhabit a feral and savage-like state and, for Hall, "elsewhere" was an impenetrable

⁹³ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 349.

jungle, a thick wilderness, which had be explored, charted, and disciplined. Hall's quest was to tame this wild territory, to bring it back within the field of visibility. With savages and primitives, the anthropological laboratory made this goal possible—it allowed modern man see through time and space, and provided the means to bring order to the colonial world. For those interested in children the goal was the same, but in the case of children the project attempted to render visible and manageable something that existed within Western boundaries.

III. Civilization Versus Savagery: The Development of the Adolescent's Moral Sense

Adolescence signified for G. Stanley Hall a period of insecure equilibrium, a moment of confused and conflicted transition in which the developing child had to navigate his way from a state dominated by savage tendencies to one in tune with the demands of modern civilization. Few disagreed that this was a crucial point in the life of any young person, and many spoke with a sense of great urgency about it: "Puberty and adolescence are without doubt the most important period in the life history of a human being," wrote one educator.⁹⁴ The developing adolescent, thought recapitulationists, was standing on a verge: before him lay the civilized world, behind him the savage and primitive past. Adolescents were literally caught between historical epochs: "the phyletic stages in the development of the race that correspond to puberty fall largely in the unhistoric period—the darkest of all dark ages, during which brute becomes man."⁹⁵ Fortunately, the adolescent need not remain stranded forever in the darkness—education could lift young

⁹⁴ Colin A. Scott, "The Psychology and Puberty of Adolescence," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1897), 843.

⁹⁵ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 91.

people from their savage state. But, while forward movement was possible, it was not necessarily inevitable. Evolution offered only the hope of progress, not the guarantee, and on this point leading evolutionary thinkers were clear. Herbert Spencer noted that evolutionary change “does not necessarily imply advance,” while Darwin wrote, “progress is no invariable rule.”⁹⁶ Indeed, the very presence of “lowly” and “backwards” groups spoke to the fact that evolutionary progress was not evenly divided among the world’s peoples. According to Darwin,

Many savages are in the same condition as when first discovered several centuries ago...we are apt to look at progress as normal in human society; but history refutes this.⁹⁷

“Proper” development for the adolescent, however, required progress. But moving from a life dominated by savage impulses and desires to a more modest, “civilized” existence was difficult for any young person. Life presented young people with constant temptations that appealed to their inherent savage desires, and giving in to such enticements, while offering temporary satisfaction to the instinctual urges common to all adolescents, would hinder moral and intellectual development. These urges, which could ruin a young person if unchecked, and could cause harm if not treated with some lenience, would have to be balanced by an educational regimen that sought to guide youth through this period of transition—Hallian pedagogy held this to be its overriding goal, its intention being to help young people navigate humanity’s evolutionary course, while, at the same time, embracing in a respectful way the child’s true nature. Hall was aware that the adolescent’s primitive tendencies were extremely powerful aspects of his

⁹⁶ Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, Vol. I, 95; Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 166.

⁹⁷ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 158.

psychic makeup and understood that the sheer strength of those predispositions could impede proper development. The point was expressed in his “general psychonomic law,”

which assumes that we are influenced in our deeper, more temperamental dispositions by the life-habits and codes of conduct of we know not what unnumbered hosts of ancestors, which like a cloud of witnesses are present throughout our lives, and that our souls are echo-chambers in which their whispers reverberate.⁹⁸

That these tendencies were deserving of respect and some indulgence, not to be dispensed with too early in a child’s development, will be a point explored in Chapter Four, which examines how the findings of Hall’s study of children influenced his pedagogical philosophy. And the point that these tendencies should not be overindulged, lest they become exaggerated and pathological, will be a theme taken up in Chapter Three, which explores the links between Hall’s theory of recapitulation and other theories of abnormality. For the moment, however, my theme is Hall’s treatment of primitiveness and savagery and their relation to the development of the adolescent’s moral sense.

The one great threat that permeated the adolescent experience was the potential for failure in transitioning beyond the rudimentary stages of human development. Some young people would linger indefinitely in the stages of barbarism and savagery, and some would remain backwards for the rest of their lives. There was also the possibility that normal development could be interrupted; some adolescents would stumble, and instead of progressing along the evolutionary scale, they would revert to the savage ways that had served them well during early childhood. Victims of arrested development or reversion retained primitive characteristics into adulthood; both were destined to endure the same struggles and indignities that a savage might experience when living among civilized men. If, as one writer noted, primitive groups like the Tasmanian aborigines

⁹⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 61.

“cannot endure the spread of European civilization in his neighbourhood; but perishes in its atmosphere,” then an underdeveloped and backward adult could be expected to experience the same fate.⁹⁹ The colonies provided countless examples of savages who had been made miserable from “partial civilization”:

At Oyster Cove I witnessed the end of all this civilization. With the exception of Walter and Maryann, the work had been in vain. The others, nearly all old women, were ignorant, almost to brutishness. They lived wretchedly in dirt and neglect. Their food was cooked in a pot from which I saw the dogs allowed to eat. They lay in their clothes, with a dirty blanket in the cold season. They could not read, and they were never read to. They cared not for prayer, and had no one to pray with them. They bartered food and blankets with disreputable neighbours to obtain drink. They sat about on the ground with their mangy dogs, smoking their filthy pipes, and cackling over stories of their past.¹⁰⁰

Such observations provided a dismal forecast for Western adults who remained mired in a primitive state. To guard against this danger Hall sought to design educational strategies that would provide adolescents with *progressive* pedagogical and developmental regimens, ensuring that individual growth unfolded in harmony with that of the world’s superior races.

If progress and development were not ineluctable forces, but only potential ones, then it was imperative that teachers understand how to nurture the adolescent’s full evolutionary potential. They also had to be aware of the dangers that would accompany developmental failure. Hall considered these issues to be the main themes of his work. Adolescence, he wrote, was a period “of insecurity and ever-impending danger of mental or physical relapse, and at the same time, of the promises and potencies of a slow but ever higher development.”¹⁰¹ “Young children grow despite great hardships,” Hall added, “but later adolescence is more dependent upon favoring conditions in the environment,

⁹⁹ Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, 378.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 357-358.

¹⁰¹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, 49.

disturbances of which more readily cause arrest and prevent maturity.”¹⁰² Within recapitulatory theory, the ideas of arrested development, relapse, and reversion were understood in terms of evolutionary failure; those who had not developed “normally” were positioned lower on a temporal scale than those who had. Detecting arrest and relapse was essentially the practice of diagnosing developmental problems historically—failure to mature properly implied deviation from a standardized evolutionary course, and those who retained adolescent characteristics into adulthood were regarded as under-evolved and primitive, having failed to transition from a savage child to a civilized man.

Arrested development or reversion to a lower evolutionary type was manifested in a variety of ways. Children so afflicted might be physiologically abnormal, inferior in intellectual ability, or deficient in their moral conduct. Anthropologists had observed the reversionary process at work in entire populations, where cultural or racial development had “backslided” to ruder forms: “It is highly probable that whole nations have retrograded in the scale of life,” wrote one of Hall’s colleagues, noting that surrendering to primitive impulses could have dire developmental consequences. “Certain savage peoples like the Bushmen and Australians are believed by some ethnologists to represent decadent stocks.”¹⁰³ Anthropologists thought degeneration could be caused by a host of environmental factors, including war, famine, vice, or the encroachment of civilizing forces. Regardless of its cause, however, the lesson was clear to students of recapitulation: if degeneration was possible in the history of the race, then it was also a danger that threatened the Western child.

¹⁰² Ibid., 47.

¹⁰³ George E. Dawson, “A Study in Youthful Degeneracy,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 4 (December 1896), 223.

If, therefore, arrested growth and degeneration be established biological facts, and if philology, anthropology and history afford evidence that the same laws are operative among men when considered as nations and types, may we not expect identical phenomena in individuals, families and communities?¹⁰⁴

Recapitulatory theory, based on the premise that individual development followed the same processes that governed social development, contended that adolescence was a period fraught with same perils and hazards that endangered the social whole. The evolutionary history of the “lower” races highlighted struggles, failures, and falls, and sounded warnings to those interested in the growth of young people—studies of “savage” peoples provided child studiers with points of reference drawn from anthropological observations, and those observations transformed the pubertal stage of life into a period of risk.

The path toward evolutionary progress was not easy and the anthropological literature cited by Hall provided plenty of examples of failure. At every turn, then, the developing adolescent experienced the same evolutionary struggles with which the race had been faced, and lived under the constant threat that proper development would be interrupted by the pulls of the race’s ancestral legacy. G. Stanley Hall’s work can only be understood in light of this tension, and it is a major theme in *Adolescence*:

At dawning adolescence this old unity and harmony with nature is broken up; the child is driven from his paradise and must enter upon a long viaticum of ascent, must conquer a higher kingdom of man for himself, break out a new sphere, and evolve a more modern story to his psycho-physical nature. Because his environment is to be far more complex, the combinations are less stable, the ascent less easy and secure; there is more danger that the youth in his upward progress, under the influence of this ‘excelsior’ motive, will backslide in one or several of the many ways possible. New dangers threaten on all sides.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 224.

¹⁰⁵ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 71-72.

Conceiving of adolescence in this way led to portrayals of adolescents as being exceptionally sensitive and malleable creatures whose position in life was extremely precarious—with the possibility that arrest or relapse could occur at any moment, adolescence came to signify the most perilous and hazardous stage of life.

Relapsed individuals were regarded as evolutionary aberrations, those who had retained less-evolved attributes and failed to keep pace with the evolutionary developments of the race as a whole. Such people—as we will see in Chapter Three—were generally regarded as unfit to live in modern society, incapable of adapting to an environment that required from its members high levels of moral, intellectual, and social development. These were society's degenerates: criminals, perverts, the insane, and even the indigent—each lived among civilized people, but none was able to function within the society in which they lived. Life for these so-called evolutionary misfits was no doubt difficult and painful, but the more pressing concern for experts of degeneracy was with the social whole. The presence of degenerate individuals within the modern social unit was disruptive and a threat to the established social order.

The theory of recapitulation regarded pathological behavior as savage and child-like, and many thought that all social pathology resulted from failure to transition through the evolutionary stages of moral development. Adult deviants had reached physical maturity but had not matured morally or intellectually—recapitulationists considered deviants to be overgrown children. The improperly developed young person tended toward deviant behavior and would become a liability once he reached adulthood. The presence of “primitives” in the midst of a civilized world introduced an element of savage havoc into an otherwise well-ordered society, and central to the discussion of adolescent

development at the turn of the twentieth century was the fear of a barbarian invasion from within.

Social stability depended on a shared commitment to a moral code, and as societies evolved into higher forms their moral systems increased in complexity. Spencerians considered social evolution to consist of the “integration of human families or tribal communities into larger and larger groups” and this required the development of a highly inclusive moral sense that bound distant members of a social whole together.¹⁰⁶ Tylor echoed the point: “civilization may be looked upon as the general improvement of mankind by higher organization of the individual and of society, to the end of promoting at once man’s goodness, power, and happiness.”¹⁰⁷ Complex social organizations relied on a broad sense of moral obligation, whereas simple societies required only limited commitments to a small band or tribe—“Individuals belonging to the same tribe are usually on the best of terms, but the different tribes are each other’s mortal enemies. Woe therefore to the stranger who dares trespass on the land of another tribe! He is pursued like a wild beast and slain and eaten.”¹⁰⁸ Encounters with indigenous peoples in the colonies highlighted the fact that some cultures were morally unfit for a modern world where social obligation extended beyond the familial or tribal sphere. And anthropologists demonstrated time and time again that savage morality clashed with European expectations concerning right conduct in a modern world. This posed a problem for colonial administrations, which required that subjected groups expand their moral obligations to include their conquerors. But, unfortunately, savage and primitive

¹⁰⁶ Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy, Vol. I*, 164.

¹⁰⁷ Tylor, *The Origins of Culture*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Carl Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals: An Account of Four Years’ Travels in Australia and of Camp Life with the Aborigines of Queensland* (Surrey: Caliban Books, 1979 [1889]), 193.

groups frequently proved themselves unable to conform to the moral standards imposed by outsiders.

In his study of the Burmese people, H. Fielding Hall wrote, they “are now very much as we were sixteen centuries ago, when the Romans ruled us. Now we are a greater people, our justice is better...our morality is inconceivably better.”¹⁰⁹ Carl Lumholtz’s studies in Australia led him to conclude that there “is not much to be said of the morals of the blacks, for I am sorry to say they have none.”¹¹⁰ Tylor disagreed, but only slightly: “Savage moral standards are real enough, but they are far looser and weaker than ours.”¹¹¹ Tylor considered “the definiteness of moral principles” to be a reliable gauge of a people’s evolutionary progress, and comparative studies of morality allowed ethnographers to “set up at least a rough scale of civilization.”¹¹² It was, however, an extremely difficult task, and Tylor bemoaned the fact that “a combined intellectual and moral measure of [the] human condition is an instrument which no student has yet learnt properly to handle.”¹¹³ Ranking civilizations according to their levels of moral development was not a precise science, but generalizations provided anthropologists with at least a rough sketch of man’s moral history.

Despite the difficulty in arranging evolutionary history according to levels moral development, it was clear to anthropologists that, with regard to morality, some races were more advanced than others. Primitives were generally thought to have a “general want of abstract ideas of morality,” and many anthropological studies provided readers

¹⁰⁹ H. Fielding Hall, *The Soul of A People*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1906 [1898]), 105.

¹¹⁰ Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, 371.

¹¹¹ Tylor, *The Origins of Culture*, 28.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

with inventories of customs and beliefs that were thought to be sure signs of moral weakness.¹¹⁴ As one anthropologist noted,

There is, I suppose, some sense of morality, as we understand it, in these savages...there appears to be no generally recognized standard of “right” or “wrong”; nor any law but revenge.¹¹⁵

A.B. Ellis’ study on the Tshi-Speaking tribes of Africa, cited by Hall in *Adolescence*, made the following observations, all suggesting that his subjects suffered from an underdeveloped moral sense: “Chastity *per se* is not understood”; “a married man can and does lend his wife, and the wife submits to be lent, without either of them supposing that they are committing an offence against morality”; infidelity was the rule; the sexual passion “prevails amongst all uncivilized people”; barbarous practices, such as human sacrifice, abound in religious rites and in war; “the infirm and helpless are invariably neglected”; infanticide is common; religious leaders led a life of “one continual round of debauchery and sensuality.” These natives, it appeared, were destined to remain in a state of low moral development and, despite European efforts to civilize them, their moral condition had remained stagnant: “the Tshi-speaking tribes are now much in the same condition, both socially and morally, as they were at the time of the Portuguese discoveries.”¹¹⁶

Again, primitive behavior was analyzed according to historical criteria—the inability to change through history ensured that primitive people possessed anachronistic moral codes that were insufficient for governing behavior in a modern context. An anthropologist who studied the American Indians made the point clearly:

¹¹⁴ Ellis, *The Tshi-Speaking Peoples*, 288.

¹¹⁵ Somerville, “Ethnographical Notes in New Georgia,” 393.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 286; 287; 285; 172-173; 173; 171; 122; 4.

Superstition and sorcery, cannibalism and cruelty, a lax morality and a remorseless spirit of revenge—all these too the Indian possessed, and, as a boy and man, practiced and adhered to them. But there is reason in all things, and the student of human nature, progressing from the lowest types to the highest intelligence, has been able to discover a logical reason for the existence of these seemingly evil attributes in the composition of the American Indian.¹¹⁷

The passage reminded readers that “cruel” or “evil” practices had their place in history and had once served important functions in less-evolved societies. But, at the same time, anthropologists warned that the retention of savage moral codes in the face of encroaching civilization was unacceptable and dangerous. Degree of development was again measured against a Western standard, and “immoral” behavior was regarded as any practice that ran counter to the norms required by contemporary, Western societies.

Savage ahistoricism also worked on another level. In *The Descent of Man* Charles Darwin explored the role that the historical sense played in the development of higher standards of morality: “A moral being,” wrote Darwin, “is one who is capable of comparing his past and future actions or motives, and of approving or disapproving of them.”¹¹⁸ For Darwin, a necessary step in the evolution of moral development was the expansion of one’s own historical consciousness, the ability to make decisions in the present after reflecting upon courses of action taken in the past. Thought insensitive to the historical dimensions of their own actions, both savages and children were regarded as unable to make sound moral decisions based on experience and reflection.

The primitive’s historical shortsightedness was accompanied by an equally narrow sense of social obligation. In *Descent*, Darwin noted that perhaps the greatest limitation in the development of a sophisticated moral sense among primitive peoples

¹¹⁷ Elbridge S. Brooks, *The Story of the American Indian: His Origin, Development, Decline and Destiny* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Company, 1887), 144-145.

¹¹⁸ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 135.

was their tendency toward exclusivity—“actions are regarded by savages, and were probably so regarded by primeval man, as good or bad, solely as they obviously affect the welfare of the tribe—not that of the species...The chief cause of the low morality of savages, as judged by our standard, are, firstly, the confinement of sympathy to the same tribe.”¹¹⁹ All degrees of social living—from the tribe to the metropolis to the nation—required of its members certain bonds of fidelity, and Darwin noted that the breadth of one’s associations expanded in relation to the level of civilization that one inhabited. All men, he continued, found pleasure in the company of their peers, sympathized with them, and were willing to perform services for their benefit, but “these feelings and services are by no means extended to all the individuals of the same species, only to those of the same association.”¹²⁰ The savage moral code applied only to those who lived in the same tribe, and actions that would not have been tolerated internally were “not regarded as crimes in relation to men of other tribes.”¹²¹ Savage morality was relative to tribal membership, which explained its failure condemn robbing, murdering, or acting treacherously against members of other tribes: “In a rude state of civilisation the robbery of strangers is, indeed, generally considered as honourable.”¹²² Darwin considered the scope of social obligation to be a reliable measurement of the moral development among a people, offering Tylor and other anthropologists a more exact method to evaluate and rank cultures. The idealized standard, apparently found within Western societies, and by which all cultures were to be judged, was an all-encompassing humanitarianism:

As man advances in civilisation, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 143.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 121.

¹²¹ Ibid., 141.

¹²² Ibid.

extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races.¹²³

But primitive man was hindered by his allegiance to these “artificial barriers” and he was a long way from acting in accordance with this ideal. Some even doubted whether obligation toward the tribe could be considered a manifestation of moral behavior at all:

In many of his horrible customs primitive man occupied a lower level than that of a large number of the higher animals. But even at this low stage of development a certain kind of social solidarity was necessary to prevent the purely selfish desires of each leading to the complete annihilation of the race. Self preservation, the strongest of all egoistic instincts, required the extension of self to all members of the tribe. Tribal interests were thus absorbed in self interest, not because of any moral ideas about the rights of others, but solely because each one’s self-interests were better served.¹²⁴

Self-interest, thought to guide the actions of savages, was also considered to be an impulse that dominated young children’s motives, whose primary concern lay in gratifying their own immediate needs. Prepubescent children, thought Hall, acted according to the principle, “I will get, be, do the most possible for myself, no matter how others suffer, provided only I am not found out and made to suffer myself.”¹²⁵ But Hall considered adolescence to be the point at which young people, if properly raised, transitioned from a selfish, egocentric life to an “altro-centric” one—a time when children came to genuinely care for the well being of others regardless of their own self-interests.

Whereas young children felt little allegiance to the social whole, at puberty a child’s social horizon began to expand. The individual’s social sense grew in harmony

¹²³ Ibid., 147.

¹²⁴ Edgar James Swift, “Some Criminal Tendencies of Boyhood; A Study in Adolescence,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 8 (March 1901), 82.

¹²⁵ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 133.

with the recapitulatory experiences of the race, and though the adolescent's social obligations became more inclusive as he grew, for a period his moral commitment was limited to members of the same "tribe." Adolescent boys, wrote Hall, found their first significant social obligations in "predatory organizations," the primary mode of adolescent social organization, which recapitulated savage tribal institutions: "These include bands of robbers, clubs for hunting and fishing, play armies, organized fighting bands between separate districts, associations for building forts, etc."¹²⁶ The recapitulation of rude social institutions constituted a normal stage in a child's development, and it was only natural that fidelity and moral obligation were extended at first only to one's closest peers. In this regard, wrote Hall, adolescents were like savages, who "can only love a few, and the diffusion and irradiation of fraternal sentiments outward toward ever larger portions and finally to the whole race is a matter of very slow and painful growth."¹²⁷ Prior to this growth, then, was a period of exclusivity, a recapitulatory pull toward the tribal:

Before ten comes the period of free spontaneous imitation of every form of adult institution....From ten to fourteen, however, associations assume a new character; boys especially cease to imitate adult organizations and tend to form social units characteristic of lower stages of human evolution—pirates, robbers, soldiers, lodges, and other savage reversionary combinations, where the strongest and boldest is the leader. They build huts, wear feathers and tomahawks as badges, carry knives and toy-pistols, make raids and sell the loot.¹²⁸

Hall considered the organization of gangs to be normal for adolescents, a requisite step in the recapitulation of man's social past—"These barbaric societies have their place and give vigor," he wrote, "but if unreduced later, as in many unsettled portions of this

¹²⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 360.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 398.

country, a semi-savage state of society results.”¹²⁹ Indeed, failure to develop strong and exclusive friendships at this stage of life was cause for concern: “Careful and sympathetic guidance is necessary to such persons, for without it maturity will find some of them social misfits, of little worth to the world and of small satisfaction to themselves.”¹³⁰ At the same time, however, Hall was careful to note that adolescent exclusivity could hinder the development of a wider sense of moral and social obligation, as it had with tribal groups who had never truly developed philanthropic or humanitarian feelings. Hall insisted that educators redirect the young person’s tribal instincts toward more productive ends, such as athletic clubs or religious organizations, else the adolescent would gravitate toward a host of “dangerous” organizations and gangs to fulfill his social needs. If the “predatory function” was not properly subordinated it became dangerous: “members are no longer satisfied with mere play, but are stronger and abler to do harm, and the spice of danger and its fascination may issue in crime.”¹³¹ Members of gangs never progressed beyond the tribal stage of morality; they held allegiance only to one another and did not consider their crimes toward outsiders to be morally wrong. This was a telling example of the dangers that accompanied arrested development.

Hall instructed his readers that “ideal conduct is that which first develops the individual and then subordinates it to the larger interests of the race.” Indeed, for Hall, one of the primary aims of education was the inculcation of social obligation, and it was a lesson students were most receptive to at adolescence.¹³² For Darwin this was the point on which “the whole question of the moral sense” rested. But the idea that one should

¹²⁹ Ibid., 399.

¹³⁰ F.G. Bonser, “Chums: A Study in Youthful Friendship,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 9 (June 1902), 233.

¹³¹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 399.

¹³² Ibid., 339.

place the well being of others before his own ran counter to man's most basic instincts, and in *The Descent of Man* Darwin wondered "why should a man feel that he ought to obey one instinctive desire rather than another?"¹³³ Social obligation and self-interest were contradictory impulses, and it was "not surprising that there should be a struggle in man between his social instincts, with their derived virtues, and his lower, though momentarily stronger impulses or desires."¹³⁴ Recapitulatory theorists assumed that difficult struggles in the history of the race were reenacted during an individual's development—consequently, maturing persons would have to learn to subordinate their "lower" impulses to higher ones. It was one of the greatest challenges during adolescence, a period when a number of powerful "antithetic impulses" pulled the adolescent in opposing directions.

"The power of self-control is latent and undeveloped, and its necessity must be slowly learned," wrote Hall.¹³⁵ Adolescents should not be expected to master it too quickly, or prematurely—as altruistic reasoning was a characteristic of higher racial development, it would not be found among young children who inhabited lower levels of evolutionary advancement. Further, when moral action based on social obligation first appeared, it would be exhibited in imperfect and rudimentary ways. Among primitives and children, self-interest was first subordinated not from a highly developed moral sense, but out of fear. "It is obvious," wrote Darwin, "that the members of the same tribe would approve of conduct which appeared to them to be for the general good, and would reprobate that which appeared evil...It is, therefore, hardly possible to exaggerate the

¹³³ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 134.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 149-150.

¹³⁵ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, 339.

importance during rude times of the love of praise and the dread of blame.”¹³⁶ Hall noted that adolescence was a period when children desired approbation more than anything else—“To win good-will and avoid ill-will is now one of the strongest motives”—suggesting that moral behavior was rooted in self-interest first, in ethical standards second.¹³⁷ Eventually moral behavior would become internalized, ingrained in the habits of individuals, a point made by Darwin in *Descent*:

After having yielded to some temptation we feel a sense of dissatisfaction, shame, repentance, or remorse, analogous to the feelings caused by other powerful instincts or desires, when left unsatisfied or balked. We compare the weakened impression of a past temptation with the ever present social instincts, or with habits, gained in early youth and strengthened during our whole lives, until they have become almost as strong as instincts.¹³⁸

The degree to which subordination occurred determined one’s position on the continuum of moral evolution. Savages, whom Darwin thought possessed a “weak power of self-command,” were thus distanced from more civilized people, who were endowed with “an advanced standard of morality.”¹³⁹

Conclusion

The evolutionary possibilities were great—as an adolescent transitioned out of the stage of self-centeredness and toward one of altruism, a “voice is soon heard in the soul, which says: Renounce and serve, life is short, powers and opportunities are limited, suffering is needful to perfection, so obey, find the joy of sacrifice, get only to give, live

¹³⁶ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 137.

¹³⁷ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 364.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 150.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 144; 163.

for others, subordinate the will to live to love, or to offspring.”¹⁴⁰ But, as Darwin, Spencer, and a number of anthropologists had shown, evolutionary potential was accompanied by the dangers of arrest and reversion, equally powerful in the history of the race. Those who did not develop a sound moral sense based on social obligation remained savage and backward, bringing into adulthood a kind of self-absorption that was natural only among children and primitives. Such adults were degenerate, possessing a “hypersensitized and abnormal soul [that] in its illusions construes the universe as if it all centered about his own person.”¹⁴¹ Self-centeredness and amoral behavior was manifested in a variety of social ills, from crime and insanity, to perversion and poverty, and the source of these many problems stemmed from the failure to transition properly from youth to adulthood. Individuals who so failed became dangerous elements in a modern society, savages in a civilized world, a point to be explored in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 303.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 313.

Chapter Three

Strange Conflations: Adolescents and Their Relation to Lunatics, Criminals, and Sexual Deviants

We can not here consider all disorders. It is quite probably not too much to say that very nearly if not quite every psychosis or neurosis of defect or excess, if not manifest before puberty, will appear or at least begin its incubation at this time.

G. Stanley Hall (1904)¹

I. Insanity

In his *Text-Book of Insanity*, published in 1879, R. von Kraft-Ebing made a startling observation: “insanity is a phenomenon constantly increasing in frequency in modern society.”² The causes of this increase were numerous, but included “enormous growth of population in great cities, with the resultant evil influences, hygienically (tuberculosis, scrofula, anemia) and morally; the increase of a mentally and physically degenerate proletariat; pauperism; predominating factory life; lack of marriage; the increasing intellectual and morally destructive craze for riches and luxury.”³ G. Stanley Hall agreed, and noted that the forces of modernization could be psychologically damaging. This was especially true among adolescents:

Civilization with all its accumulated mass of cultures and skills, its artifacts, its necessity of longer and severer apprenticeship and specialization, is ever harder on adolescents, and even in a republic the submerged fraction of the population

¹ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence; Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education, Vol. I* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969 [1904]), 292.

² R. von Kraft-Ebing, *Text-Book of Insanity: Based on Clinical Observations for Practitioners and Students of Medicine* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1905 [1879]), 140.

³ *Ibid.*, 139.

not adequate to achieve success in its ever fiercer competitions, who drop limp and exhausted in body and soul to a condition acknowledged by many anthropologists to be essentially inferior to that of most of the lowest savages, increases, and institutions for defectives and those who live on charities multiply.⁴

The stress of modern life may well have driven many people mad, but historians of medicine have located another cause for the perceived increase of insanity: new etiological theories within the psychiatric discipline itself. The rise of insanity, these historians hypothesize, was the result of changing medical perceptions. In the first half of the nineteenth century, most “physicians maintained that insanity was ultimately rooted in the organism, particularly the brain”—madness was a disease caused primarily by structural defects in the lunatic’s mind.⁵ But later in the century the focus of psychiatric diagnosis shifted from the physiological to the social:

Prior to the mid-19th century while the mad might suffer from disturbed passions medical explanations predominately attributed insanity to the impaired intellect. However, during the 19th century cases of madness were documented in which individuals did not display any overt mental defect. Instead they exhibited some morally offensive behavior manifested in bizarre or outrageous conduct.⁶

“Persons perceived as deviating from the moral norm,” the authors continued, “thus became the proper subjects of medicine.”⁷ This diagnostic shift cast a wider psychiatric net across society and, as a result, more people were ensnared. The idea that “insane” behavior was essentially anti-social and immoral in nature, not necessarily caused by physiological irregularities, expanded the scope of the psychiatric examination proper. No longer confined to the laboratory or asylum, the new psychiatry positioned patients in

⁴ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 321-322.

⁵ Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit of Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 498.

⁶ Heidi Rimke and Alan Hunt, “From Sinners to Degenerates: The Medicalization of Morality in the 19th Century,” *History of the Human Sciences* 15 (No. 1, 2002), 70.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

a much broader context where mental wellbeing was determined by the ability to function within society at large—mental disease, and “abnormal behavior” in general, was manifested by a patient’s inability to conduct himself in accordance with social norms. Henry Maudsley, an English psychiatrist, considered “moral” insanity to be a social disease:

Insanity means essentially then such a want of harmony between the individual and his social medium, by reason of some defect or fault of mind in him, as prevents him from living and working among his kind in the social organization.⁸

Emil Kraepelin, the well-known German psychiatrist, thought that the symptoms of *dementia praecox*—the most common form of insanity, and to which adolescents were particularly prone—were exhibited not by physiological irregularities in the brain’s structure, but by certain behaviors:

Parents and friends notice that there is a change in the disposition, a laxity in morals, a disregard for formerly cherished ideas, a lack of affection toward relatives and friends, an absence of their accustomed sympathy, and above all an unnatural satisfaction with their own ideas and behavior. They fail to exhibit the usual pleasures in their employment.⁹

Representing madness as a defect in one’s moral condition, evidenced by the failure to adhere to society’s mores and the inability to fulfill certain social expectations and obligations, transformed psychiatry from a branch of medicine that studied the physiological mind exclusively to one that assessed mental competency based on a patient’s possession of vices and lack of virtues. Moral insanity, however, was not a structural defect that could be detected through scientific tests; instead, it was a socially determined condition. Diagnosing madness, then, occurred in a value-specific context.

⁸ Henry Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind: A Study of its Distempers, Deformities, and Disorders* (London: Julian Friedmann Publishers, 1979 [1895]), 3.

⁹ Emil Kraepelin, *Clinical Psychiatry* (New York: MacMillan, 1907 [1902]), 225-226.

Psychiatry thus constituted a “privileged source of authority” where “experts of normality” defined insanity as “violations of the norms of respectable society.”¹⁰

Historian of medicine Roy Porter noted that the profession’s power grew with the expanded definition of insanity: “psychiatry seemed to many to turn into society’s policeman or gate-keeper, designed to police the boundaries between the sane and the insane, the normal and the pathological.”¹¹

The boundary that psychiatrists drew between the normal and abnormal ran parallel to the one anthropologists had drawn between civilization and primitiveness, evidence that changing views of madness were influenced by the same set of racist premises that proved so important to other disciplines in the human sciences. In fact, the resemblances between insanity and savagery were so marked that the two were frequently conflated into a single category: “The state of primitive thought is nothing more or less than insanity, and has its parallel only in our asylums for mental diseases.”¹² Both primitiveness and madness were regarded as “conditions” in which the individual’s will was overpowered by reflexive and irrational impulses. Neither was thought suited to live in the modern context, where social order relied on self-restraint and internalized controls. Indeed, many savage practices were deemed “insane” by civilized peoples, while behavior exhibited by lunatics was often considered “savage.” The similarities shared by psychiatric diagnoses and anthropological observations were sometimes striking, a point illustrated by two passages quoted below. The first is a psychiatric

¹⁰ Rimke and Hunt, “From Sinners to Degenerates,” 60; 63.

¹¹ Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, 513.

¹² Quoted in Alexander Francis Chamberlain, *The Child: A Study in the Evolution of Man* (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1900), 299.

assessment of a patient suffering from hysteria and mania, the second an anthropologist's testimony of a religious rite conducted by an African priest:

Then there is much excitement of a noisy and tumultuous kind, with violent outbursts of laughter, loud singing, startling yells and cries, and ceaseless chattering; sudden starts, leaps, bounds and runs, and impulsive acts of apparently wanton mischief or destruction; paroxysms of aimless screaming, writhings, strugglings, pushings, strikings in resistance to control, all having a show of willfulness yet without definite method or aim.¹³

The trembling increased, and soon the priest was shuddering as if in an ague fit. Every portion of his body seemed to shake; the head, arms, legs, abdomen, and pectoral muscles, all quivering violently. He leaned forward and appeared to be endeavoring to vomit, doubtless to give the idea that his body was struggling to expel the god which was now supposed to possess him. A little foam appeared on his lips, and from time to time saliva fell on the ground. Next, with open mouth and protruding tongue, and with eyes wildly rolling, he worked himself, still seated and quivering violently, into the middle of the arena. There he suddenly leaped in the air, extending his arms over his head, and the quivering ceased. His eyes were closed, his tongue hung from his mouth, and with the slow and uncertain gait of a drunken man he walked backwards and forwards.¹⁴

In each case, base impulses had gained control over the individual's will, weakening the inhibitive faculty that sane and moral conduct in a civilized society required. Both the hysteric patient and the African priest exhibited insane tendencies because their behavior represented the lowest possible kind of activity, "that of pure reflexes. The acts are unconscious (at any rate not deliberate), immediate, irresistible, with an adaptation invariable and of little complexity."¹⁵ Hysterical behavior was not only irrational and impulsive, it was also socially unproductive—its symptoms prevented productive social engagement and the hysteric was thought to be a noncontributing member of society, a drain upon its resources:

¹³ Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind*, 389-390.

¹⁴ A. B. Ellis, *The Tshi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Languages, Etc.* (Oosterhout, The Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1966 [1887]), 132-133.

¹⁵ Th. Ribot, *The Diseases of the Will*, (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1903 [1894]). 57.

This extreme mobility in their state of mind and their affective dispositions, this instability of character, this lack of fixity, this absence of stability in their ideas and their volitions, explain the incapacity which they experience of giving their attention very long to reading, study, or any kind of work.¹⁶

If increasing civilization and social complexity gave birth to a larger population of lunatics and madmen, it was because civilization imposed upon its members a strict code of conduct that many found difficult to comply with. And in their noncompliance, “insane” people demonstrated either an inability or an unwillingness to adapt to the demands of modern, civilized life. From a recapitulatory perspective, patients suffering from mental illnesses had failed to transition from a state of savage-childhood to one of civilized-adulthood—in Hall’s words, insanity was caused by “difficulty and liability of failure to pass successfully to the adult stage.”¹⁷ If primitives and hysterics shared the same symptoms it was because both, in their failure to evolve an “adult” state of mind, retained similar juvenile characteristics indicative of arrested development. Kraepelin agreed: “The condition of the patients remains essentially the same as it was in youth,” he said of people suffering from “unstable” personalities.¹⁸ To be insane was to remain childlike: hysterics “behave like children that one sets to laughing with noises when they still have on their cheeks the tears that they have just shed.”¹⁹

For children and members of non-European populations the road to maturity was fraught with obstacles—both were thought to inhabit pre-modern historical epochs and their predisposition to think and act in “uncivilized” ways could impede development. And while the child’s future remained unwritten, many anthropologists thought that the

¹⁶ Ibid., 88.

¹⁷ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 239-240.

¹⁸ Kraepelin, *Clinical Psychiatry*, 524.

¹⁹ Quoted in Ribot, *The Diseases of the Will*, 87.

lower races had reached a terminal point in their evolution—many considered efforts to civilize the lower races to be futile. Psychiatric studies bolstered these prejudices by demonstrating that primitive groups were mentally unfit to thrive in a civilized environment. Furthermore, many argued that civilization could actually destabilize the primitive's mental constitution. The argument appealed to some postbellum Americans, who considered the presence of freed slaves to be a vexing problem: could a racially inferior group be integrated into a modern civilization? On this problem psychiatrists and anthropologists generally agreed: Africans were not mentally equipped to meet the challenge. Historian John S. Hughes studied the psychiatric response to the problem of emancipation and discovered that it was common for members of the medical profession to think that the unnatural "forcing" of civilization upon freedmen was psychologically damaging. Whereas insanity among African slaves "was scarcely known," after emancipation the number of cases among blacks exploded. Medical men assumed that the

the radically changed social and economic environment placed unprecedented stresses on the freedmen. Emancipation, according to this racial logic, had removed African Americans from the protection of slavery and placed them in a state of independence and competition in a civilized society for which nature had not fitted them.²⁰

Hughes' findings were confirmed by John Haller, whose research uncovered a significant increase of recorded cases of insanity among Negroes after emancipation: "Without a proper ancestry conditioned by the responsibilities of freedom and without the education or preparedness for responsibility, the Negro citizen, thrust into a modern world which he had in no way helped to create, deteriorated under the strain."²¹

²⁰ John S. Hughes, "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910," *The Journal of Southern History* 58 (August 1992), 438.

²¹ John S. Haller, Jr., *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995 [1971]), 46.

Hall generally agreed with this diagnosis. Slavery, he thought, had provided African descendants with an “easy” life that was free from worry, a condition not unlike childhood. Furthermore, the institution had actually been beneficial: it imposed hygienic restraints that ensured healthful living, developed a strong work ethic, and protected the slave from his own devices—the slave was “kept indoors at night, there were no liquor saloons for him to frequent, and in sickness he was cared for.”²² Emancipation had interrupted a stable period in the race’s history; life was no longer going to be so carefree: when former slaves “became free and invested with the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, new and heavy demands were made upon his intellect.”²³ Many cracked under the pressure—in losing their chains, some psychiatrists concluded, former slaves also lost their “mental equilibrium.” The prevalence of insanity among freedmen lent scientific credence to the assumption that “the Negro in general is a born slave,” unfit to live as a free, productive member of American society.²⁴ It was a notion entertained by Hall: “at a certain stage slavery may be the best discipline for lowly races.”²⁵ Emancipation required refined methods of oppression, where the logic of racial inferiority determined more subtle forms of racism. The perceived increase of insanity among African Americans provides a telling example of how social context influenced scientific theory and, specifically, how social values affected the practice of psychiatry.

The “problem of civilization” also frustrated medical workers in the colonial setting, and there too natives were frequently diagnosed as suffering from forms of insanity—again, the diagnosis was based on an apparent inability to adapt to the demands

²² Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 676.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Harry H. Johnston, *A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Races* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905 [1899]), 91.

²⁵ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 671.

of Western civilization. Like anthropology, the history of colonial psychiatry—or “ethnopsychiatry”—highlights “the important relationship between scientific knowledge and colonial domination.”²⁶ Nineteenth-century colonial psychiatry, which assumed that “pathology marched in step with civilization,” delivered diagnoses that modeled those reached about liberated American slaves: “Most theorists about African madness felt that civilization itself brought psychic disturbances to ‘deculturated’ Africans who were unprepared for rapid progress.”²⁷ According to another historian of colonial psychiatry, behavior “that did not fit in the Western classification was bizarre, exotic, or esoteric, thereby sowing the seeds for culture-bound syndromes.”²⁸

Recapitulatory theorists learned important, though misguided, lessons from these contexts of transition. G. Stanley Hall imported psychiatry’s bleak racial conclusions into his theory of adolescent development: if the savage’s transition to civilization was synonymous with the child’s transition to adulthood, and if the primitive’s experience was marked by psychological difficulties, then young people could also expect to find adolescence to be a psychologically taxing period. More alarming was the possibility that children would fall victim to the same illnesses and immoralities from which the non-Westerner suffered when forced to live according to the dictates of a civilization for which he was unsuited—if civilization drove the lower races mad, then it also had the potential to destabilize their recapitulatory counterparts:

Among the chief external causes of the diseases of this age are all those influences which tend to precocity, e.g. city life with its earlier puberty, higher death rate, wider range and greater superficiality of knowledge, observations of vice and enhanced temptation, lessened repose, incessant distraction, more

²⁶ Richard Keller, “Madness and Colonization: Psychiatry in the British and French Empires, 1800-1962,” *Journal of Social History* 35 (Winter 2001), 296.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 303; 306.

²⁸ Dinesh Bhugra, “The Colonized Psyche: British Influence on Indian Psychiatry,” in Dinesh Bhugra and Roland Littlewood, eds., *Colonialism and Psychiatry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 53.

impure air, greater liability to contagion, and absence of the sanifying influences and repose of nature in country life. At its best, metropolitan life is hard on childhood and especially so on pubescents, and children who can not pass these years in the country are robbed of a right of childhood that should be inalienable, and are exposed to many deleterious influences which jeopardize both health and morals.²⁹

Puberty was the “age when all the greatest problems of life present themselves simultaneously.” And for the first time in their lives, adolescents were confronted with “the choice of a career and the anxiety about making a living; all the problems of love, and for some the religious problems.”³⁰ It was a stressful period, made more so by “the tumult of the first stages of puberty, which often threatens decomposition of the personality [and when] the psycho-physic organism is peculiarly sensitive.”³¹ High levels of external pressure, coupled with the internal stress that accompanied pubertal development, predisposed young people to a host of mental problems. To some degree, mental instability was to be expected—adolescents retained residual traces of the lower mental processes from early childhood. But what was normal in one stage of development was abnormal in another, and the retention of childlike behaviors into adolescence—no matter how innocent or natural they may have been—threatened to become pathological.

Psychoses and neuroses abound in early adolescent years more than at any other period of life. This causes great emotional strain, which some have described as a kind of repressed insanity that is nevertheless normal at this period. To keep down morbid impulses is often a very difficult matter in this age of stress.³²

This “repressed insanity” was represented by behaviors that inhered in the adolescent’s constitution, a peculiar psychic makeup where savage and civilized impulses battled for

²⁹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, 321.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 277.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 269.

³² *Ibid.*, 266.

control. To fully understand the adolescent's tendency toward insane behavior required sensitivity to the historical and developmental aspects of this period of life, and this understanding relied heavily on recapitulatory, anthropological, and evolutionary theories.

we must seek the key to these perversions by addressing ourselves to the larger, underlying, and preliminary problem of determining the natural forms of psychic and somatic transitions from childhood to maturity, and study what puberty and adolescence really mean as developmental stages of human life which it is the purpose of this work to investigate.³³

The psychiatrist Henry Maudsley agreed, noting that “mental organization” had been inherited from untold generations and that the study of pathology must be “historical and social.”³⁴ The historical method of pathological investigation, proposed by Hall and Maudsley, helped to bind savages, children, and madmen into a single developmental category, where the characteristics of each were conflated into an overarching category that, in the end, failed to differentiate between any of them. The point is best illustrated by an example drawn from *Adolescence*.

For Hall, puberty was “the birthday of the imagination,” a time when young people lived in a state of constant “reverie,” consumed by daydreams and fantasies. It was a period of “inner absorption and meditation, when reality fades and its very existence is questioned,” and among “many sane children, their own surroundings not only shrivel but become dim and shadowy compared with the realm of fancy.”³⁵ The imagination, at this age, was a “totalitizing faculty.” Hall considered the wandering and creative adolescent mind to be a normal rehearsal of the recapitulatory drama, and an

³³ Ibid., 308.

³⁴ Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind*, 18.

³⁵ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 87; Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 313.

absolutely necessary one at that. Imagination was an atavistic inheritance and normal development required that it be exercised vigorously as individuals recapitulated the history of the race. Savages, with their limited intellects, and their inability to distinguish between perceptions of the sense and the purely fictional creations of the mind, relied heavily on the imagination in the construction of their worldviews—religions and countless cultural and spiritual practices were based on the “misconception” that experiences of the mind and sense were equally valid. This limitation, thought Herbert Spencer, resulted from the fact that primitive people had no concept of “Mind” as an internal agent and thus mistook thought for reality; primitives lacked the understanding that some experiences were manufactured internally and had no correspondence with real world events. It was a characteristic that primitives shared with children: “Like every child,” wrote Spencer, “the primitive man passes through a phase of intelligence during which there has not yet arisen the power of introspection implied by saying—‘I think—I have ideas.’”³⁶

The inability to differentiate between one’s ideas and experiences was frequently manifested in the primitive practice of assigning reality to dreams. Spencer hypothesized that the evolution of supernatural concepts began with the primitive’s inability to distinguish between lived experiences and those occurring in a dream state, a hypothesis that Durkheim would later employ. Primitive people thought that their dream experiences were real and, from the anthropologist’s perspective, this resulted in a confused picture of reality—belief in the literal interpretation of dreams made it impossible for primitives to create a “true” picture of the world. As dream-experience often contradicted world-

³⁶ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology, Volume One* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1892), 141.

experience and tended “to cancel the conclusions drawn from day-experiences,”³⁷ belief in their validity sometimes resulted in beliefs that were fantastic or “crazy”: in dreams physical laws could be transcended and the dead could be resurrected. To primitives these experiences were normal and real, but to Westerners believing in them was a sign of insanity. Likewise, adolescents were also susceptible to the misinterpretation of dreams, which frequently colored their feelings and perceptions.³⁸

Proper development, however, required the eventual recognition that the contents of one’s mind did not always reflect reality. And to ensure normal development, the individual would have to shift his epistemological allegiance from the realm of mental imaginings to the world of sense perception. If this never occurred then the developing person would not only retain a rude sense of reality that was commonly found among savages and children, but his “dreamy conditions may become habitual, so that we see here the natural budding of insane perceptions.”³⁹ Emil Kraepelin’s delusional patients shared much in common with Hall’s adolescents and Spencer’s savages. Mentally ill people experienced hallucinations—the “falsification of real percepts”—and their delusions “cannot be corrected either by argument or experience [because] they are always due to a morbid interpretation of the events arising in the patient’s own imagination.”⁴⁰ For Kraft-Ebing, patients suffering from morbid delusions experienced their hallucinations “with an equal intensity to that of a sensory experience induced by an

³⁷ Ibid., 140.

³⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 262-263.

³⁹ Ibid., 314.

⁴⁰ Kraepelin, *Clinical Psychiatry*, 5; 48.

actual object”—“in the insane the hallucination is mistaken for an objective sensory impression.”⁴¹

In these sources, Hall found psychiatric authorities whose work could be used to support his theory of recapitulation. Kraft-Ebing, for example, was of the opinion that delusions sometimes stemmed from cultural and historic causes, and were deeply rooted in racial psychology—the view supported the belief that insane behavior need not result from physiological causes, but was entrenched in the historic legacy of the human race. Religious leaders, Mohammed, for instance, were “hallucinated persons” who “controlled the delusions and superstitions of their times.” Thus, the “history of hallucinations contains a part of the history of the civilization of the peoples and all times” and they “are of the greatest importance as giving origin to folklore and fables.”⁴²

Insanity, then, had its historical antecedents. It was caused by the retention of primitive mental characteristics and demonstrated a failed transition from one developmental stage to another. The potential for psychological breakdown threatened savages in their encounter with civilization and children on their path to maturity—success in each case required that one navigate from a condition of natural insanity to a culturally imposed state of “sanity.” Both sanity and madness represented “a fulfilled possibility of development in some specific direction” and individual development in either direction was determined by any number of predetermined evolutionary courses.⁴³ Hall’s brand of genetic psychology, whether considering pathological behavior or otherwise, evaluated individual behavior in relation to the historical context it most approximated, and diagnoses were always relative to the evolutionary frameworks he

⁴¹ Kraft-Ebing, *Text-Book of Insanity*, 108-109.

⁴² Ibid, 110-111.

⁴³ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 60.

inherited from Darwin, Spencer, Tylor, and others. Hall's reliance on the hypothetical historical record crafted by evolutionary thinkers required a methodological approach

with a mental horizon vastly widened and with an historic sense less atrophied. We have to deal with the archeology of mind, with zones or stratas which precede consciousness as we know it, compared to which even it, and especially cultured intellect, is an upstart novelty, with everywhere a fuller and clearer expression of a part of the soul, but always partial, one-sided, and more accidental and precarious.⁴⁴

Combined, the lunatic, savage, and child provided the genetic psychologist with a valuable record of man's history of mental development—as with anthropology, the method was comparative. The early history of Western man was uncovered by excavating the “zones or stratas” of his primitive past. In the case of psychiatry, lunatics and savages each exhibited tendencies ranging from the precognitive to the insane, behaviors that were at one point common to all developing races. Practitioners who employed this historico-developmental methodology would gather data “empirically from the comparative study of lower forms of life and of children and from the collation of the varied inner and outer experiences of many minds besides his own.” Few goals were more important to Hall than gaining “a far larger command of data up and down the phyletic scale” because, ultimately, “we really know things only when we trace their development from the farthest beginnings through all their stages to maximal maturity and decay.”⁴⁵

As shown in Chapter Two, anthropological studies led to a “precious” kind of self-knowledge—Hall also wrote, “the same is true of defectives, criminals, and the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 62

insane.”⁴⁶ The knowledge gained from the genetic study of abnormal and pathological conditions, such as insanity, provided insights that could be shocking: in the recapitulation of the race’s history, all children briefly experienced a period of temporary “insanity.” Abnormality was normal and was to be embraced, at least temporarily and within certain boundaries. Hall urged pedagogues to recognize that seemingly insane behaviors exhibited by children must be allowed to have an outlet, while simultaneously requiring that teachers understand that proper development required the eventual cessation of those same behaviors. The education of adolescents entailed finding evolutionary balance: if teachers and parents repressed natural behaviors too early in development, or allowed them to flourish after they should have passed, then the child would certainly suffer. On the one hand, development could be arrested if atavistic urges were stamped out before they had the opportunity to develop into something higher. But, at the same time, if adolescence was prolonged indefinitely, and if juvenile attributes were carried into adulthood, then those once-natural behaviors could become pathological. Unfortunately, the modern school had little knowledge of those dangers and was, in Hall’s opinion, sadly out of touch with the adolescent’s nature:

In no civilized land is teaching so unprofessional or school boards at such a low level of incompetence. Nowhere are the great traditions of the race so neglected, the high school so oblivious to either the nature or the needs, or both, of the adolescent stage of life.⁴⁷

Schools and teachers, unfamiliar with the adolescent’s nature, demanded more from him than he was capable, and expected from youth rational behavior and a logical intellect. To force young people along such channels was to rush adolescents through the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁷ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, xvii.

recapitulatory stage in which they had the natural right to linger. Indeed, for Hall the primary cause of insanity was precocious development. Forbidding children to express their true inner natures, and forcing them into molds for which they were unfitted, was to ignore the lessons of evolutionary history. Sometimes it was enough to drive a person crazy, just as freed slaves and colonized natives were driven “mad” by the demands placed upon them. To return to Maudsley’s notion of the social causes of insanity:

He who has in him the current social nature of one epoch and is suited to live in it may be quite out of harmony with the social thought and feeling of another epoch and unsuited to live in it.⁴⁸

Insanity, so defined, was the result of a patient’s inability to conduct oneself in accordance with the norms of society. Hall’s contributions, which relied on the theory on recapitulation, added another facet to the argument: certain people were evolutionary predisposed to conflict with those norms. From this logic it was clear that savages and lunatics, both possessing “social natures” unsuited to the contemporary world, would be forced to exist outside of it, forever trapped in an undeveloped, child-like state where they would be dependent on the care and guidance of others, always requiring oversight in an asylum of one kind or another. What remained to be seen, however, was whether or not some or many adolescents would join them. The answer to the question depended on the educational response to the problem: Hallian pedagogical and developmental regimens ensured the successful transition from one “epoch” to the other, whereas subscribing to the educational *status quo* would guarantee the continued increase of juvenile insanity. G. Stanley Hall, always the optimist, took solace in the fact that the adolescent possessed the potential to adapt to the demands of a civilized world,

⁴⁸ Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind*, 1.

something his unfortunate counterparts lacked. For the time being, however, they were all one.

II. Criminality

G. Stanley Hall devoted an entire chapter of *Adolescence* to the issue of juvenile crime, a problem he considered to be both “profound and complex,” and one that was gaining momentum:

In all civilized lands, criminal statistics show two sad and significant facts: First, that there is a marked increase of crime at the age of twelve to fourteen, not in crimes of one, but of all kinds, and that this increase continues for a number of years...The second fact is that the proportion of juvenile delinquents seems to be everywhere increasing and crime is more and more precocious.⁴⁹

Many thought that the mounting pressures faced by young people in a modern world, particularly in urban-industrial environments, caused the increase in juvenile crime. This diagnosis modeled the one put forward by psychiatrists, who also sought to account for the rise in deviant behavior among nineteenth-century adolescents and oftentimes relied on environmentalist explanations. Hall agreed with the premise: “Juvenile crime shows thus the great difficulty which youth finds in making adjustments to the social surroundings [and in] passing from home to the new conditions of industrial life with its ever severer code, control is increasingly difficult.”⁵⁰ And the changing social context of nineteenth-century life did contribute to an increase in crime. Historians have found that the Civil War produced “huge numbers of orphans and impoverished fatherless families”;

⁴⁹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, 325.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 333-334.

many children were left “unable to support themselves and hence turned to thievery.”⁵¹

Urban and industrial development, which was accompanied by an influx of poor immigrants and a declining standard of living, destabilized life and sowed the seeds of discontent from which crime grew. As Michael Katz has noted, nineteenth-century reformers thought “crime, poverty, immigration, and urbanization were inextricably woven together,” and were of the opinion that “cities bred crime [because] they bred poverty.”⁵² With these social and economic changes, America witnessed an explosion in the number of “dependent” children who, without the benefit of family, school, work, or home, lived as orphans or vagrants, “wander[ing] the streets in great numbers, sometimes ending up in poorhouses and jails.”⁵³ For many children, it seemed as if survival necessitated engaging in criminal activities.

Theft was the most likely crime committed by juvenile delinquents, which, as Hall noted, “constitutes more than half the earliest crimes of youth.”⁵⁴ Michael Katz’s study of juvenile crime in mid-nineteenth century Massachusetts confirmed the point: most of the “offences involved stealing under one label or another.”⁵⁵ The problem of theft among young people was commonplace and, to some extent, normal: “Theft in childhood,” wrote Hall, “is generally to satisfy immediate wants and desires, and it is interesting to see how edibles, or thefts of money to procure them, predominate.”⁵⁶ Most

⁵¹ Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 131; Priscilla Ferguson Clement, “The City and the Child, 1860-1885,” in Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner, eds., *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 256.

⁵² Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 172-173.

⁵³ Leroy Ashby, *Endangered Children: Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 63-64.

⁵⁴ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 364.

⁵⁵ Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform*, 178.

⁵⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 364.

children had been raised in “communal” households where everything around them was theirs to take and use, and it was a “long, hard curriculum” to learn that goods in the marketplace were not common property—it was understandable that acts of petty larceny would be committed by children who simply didn’t know any better, and especially among those who were impoverished and destitute. It was certainly a crime was easily explained by the theory of recapitulation, which demonstrated that notions of private ownership came late in man’s development.

The earliest form of theft is due to ignorance of what ownership is and means. Primitive man under the tribal organization had most things in common, and isolation was such that where every community was surrounded by unappropriated land and all the fruits of nature and animals of hunt, individual possession had a very limited sphere.⁵⁷

Less understandable than theft, but certainly more harmful, was the increase in criminal vice, or “crimes against purity,” as one nineteenth-century criminologist labeled them.⁵⁸ In Katz’s study, crimes of juvenile “stubbornness,” which were defined as transgressions against society’s moral code, included intoxication, lying, profanity, sleeping out, truancy, tobacco use, association with low classes, running away, filial insubordination, and Sabbath breaking.⁵⁹ These crimes were less straightforward than offences committed against persons or property, as infractions like truancy, gambling, drinking, and sexual promiscuity had no assignable victim. But, as violations against society’s moral precepts, they were considered more egregious. Labeling such infractions “criminal,” however, was an imprecise science and one that relied on the subjective judgment of criminologists and other reformers. As historian Lawrence M. Friedman has written: “Whatever else it does, the criminal code reflects...some notion of the moral

⁵⁷ Ibid., 363-364.

⁵⁸ Enrico Ferri, *Criminal Sociology* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896), 57.

⁵⁹ Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform*, 179.

sense of the community—or, to be more accurate, the moral sense of the people who count, and who speak out, in the community.”⁶⁰ From this perspective, criminality, like insanity, was an abnormality defined by a select group of privileged professionals who determined which behaviors were normal and which were not; both were relative to context and determined by social bias:

ideas about what is right and wrong ebb and flow, in space and time; what is heinous in one period is shrugged off in another, or even lauded to the skies...And of course these values and ideas change over time. The ideas in people’s heads reflect their experiences; and their experiences are distinctly time-bound and culture-bound.⁶¹

Friedman suggests that criminal codes are somewhat arbitrary, determined by social context, and written and enforced by privileged and powerful groups whose interests are reflected in the very laws they write. Evolutionary thinkers like Hall also understood that the “criminal” was not an immutable type, but one that changed with the social and ethical needs of any given society. Indeed, some activities deemed criminal by the contemporary world would have caused little or no alarm in the past: “Many of our greatest criminals would have been normal and perhaps eminently useful citizens in other ages and places.”⁶² The same was true for history’s criminals, some of whom may have found a welcome place in the modern world: “Socrates and Jesus were criminals according to the legal standards of their day.”⁶³ It was clear to Hall that ancient and modern notions of criminality were often antagonistic:

We confine and kill those who in the days of Abraham and Ulysses or in positions of power and influence would be heroes. Of the ten chief crimes of the Hebrews of old, only one is now a crime. Many of the knights and barons of the

⁶⁰ Lawrence M. Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* (New York: Basic Book, 1993), 125.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

⁶² Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 341.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Middle Ages were brigands, but were not then outlawed by public sentiment as abnormal.⁶⁴

In many passages of *Adolescence* Hall sounds like a strict environmentalist and attributes the causes of crime to a more demanding, and sometimes unrealistic, criminal code—if more prohibitions led to more crime, then perhaps the cause of increased criminality lay in society’s expectations, and not in the criminal’s own flaws: “Extreme views of the abnormality of crime may well make us pause, when we reflect on its relativity.”⁶⁵ But Hall’s admission that all criminal codes were relative to time and place did not lead him to dismiss their validity. Never did he waver in his conviction that it was the duty of all citizens to obey the laws of their land, and he certainly did not condone theft, violence, drunkenness, prostitution, or any of the other crimes and vices that plagued modern life. “Relative” as the society’s body of laws may have been, Hall’s concern was not with the laws *per se*, but with the great number of people who were having difficulty in obeying them. Social living required the subordination of one’s impulses to the legal dictates of society, and the pressing question for Hall was why modern man was having an increasingly difficult time in doing so. And in asking that question he joined a heated debate in criminal studies, one that pitted environmental explanations against hereditary, or atavistic, ones:

Criminal anthropology is a branch of sociology, and its purpose is to investigate crime scientifically: to study its origin and causes, and to determine, if possible, what proportion of responsibility belongs to society and what to the criminal.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 340-341.

⁶⁶ Frances Alice Kellor, “Criminal Anthropology in Relation to Criminal Jurisprudence,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 4 (January 1899), 515.

Hall shared his commitment with both schools, rejecting the nature-nurture duality as artificial. On the one hand, he agreed with the environmentalist position that criminals were products of the social organism: “Hence the increase of juvenile crime, so deplored, is not entirely due to city life or growing youthful depravity, but also to the increasing ethical demands of society.”⁶⁷ But Hall’s commitment to the theory of recapitulation ensured that his interpretations of social problems could never be strictly environmentalist. Inherent in the theory was an element of biological determinism, which often explained an individual’s actions as resulting from atavistic impulses that were deeply engrained in man’s nature. In fact, for Hall, all people possessed inherent atavistic tendencies that, if unchecked, predisposed them to act in criminal ways: “Who that is honest and has true self-knowledge will not confess to recognizing in his own soul the germs and possibilities of about every crime, vice, insanity, superstition, and folly in conduct ever heard of?”⁶⁸ Hall was sympathetic toward environmentalist explanations, but his allegiance was never total. He was equally indebted to another strand of criminological studies, one that located the causes of criminal behavior in inborn defects, atavistic reversions, and physiological abnormalities.

The most influential advocate of this school was the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, who founded the field of criminal anthropology. According to historian of criminology Nicole Hahn Rafter, Lombroso’s doctrine was “materialist” and “positivist” in that it “invoked a philosophical position according to which all phenomena [could] be explained in terms of physical laws.”⁶⁹ The laws Lombroso relied on were drawn from the field of evolutionary biology, and his work was clearly influenced by the theory of

⁶⁷ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 405.

⁶⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 68.

⁶⁹ Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 112.

recapitulation and its application to anthropometry and anthropology. Lombroso's laboratory investigations had revealed that born criminal types possessed physiological atavisms inherited from the race's primitive past—the criminal, in essence, was a reversionary savage who “reproduces physical, psychic, and functional qualities of remote ancestors.”⁷⁰ Born criminals, who accounted for approximately one-third of all criminals, possessed the same physiological attributes that physical anthropologists thought marked the savage type: prognathous and asymmetrical cranial and facial structures; the eyes of the Mongolian type; oddly shaped ears typical of the ancient Egyptians; noses like the “Akkas, a tribe of pygmies of Central Africa”; Negroid mouths; simian-like teeth—all of these characteristics were “the outward and visible signs of a mysterious and complicated process of degeneration, which in the case of the criminal evokes evil impulses that are largely of atavistic origin.”⁷¹

Lombroso's studies in criminal anthropology were, in the words of Stephen Jay Gould, “the most influential doctrine ever to emerge from the anthropometric tradition.”⁷² Lombroso's treatise, *Criminal Man*, was not available in English until 1911 when his daughter published a summarized account of the text, but Americans were familiar with his work through secondary sources.⁷³ And those sources were influential—as one contemporary noted, “Americans, as a rule, are familiar only with the Italian school” which “has continually sought to ally the criminal with animals and barbaric peoples.”⁷⁴ Hall's familiarity with Lombroso's work is demonstrated by frequent citations in

⁷⁰ Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man: According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso* (Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1972 [1911]), 8.

⁷¹ Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, 24.

⁷² Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996 [1981]), 152. At the same time, Gould described Lombroso's primary work, *Criminal Man*, as “the most ludicrous excursion into anthropomorphism ever published,” 154.

⁷³ Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals*, 114.

⁷⁴ Kellor, “Criminal Anthropology in Relation to Criminal Jurisprudence,” 525; 517.

Adolescence. And though Hall was unsatisfied with Lombroso's strict biological determinism and his extremely low opinion of savages (which Hall considered to be greatly exaggerated), he did find in *Criminal Man* a work of "great and epoch-making significance" that, if tempered, could serve as a useful model.⁷⁵

Aside from cataloguing marks of physical inferiority, Lombroso also found that criminals and savages shared a number of "mental affections": "in the place of domestic and social affections, the criminal is domesticated by a few absorbing passions: vanity, impulsiveness, desire for revenge, licentiousness."⁷⁶ The savage-criminal was also thought to be cynical, treacherous, vain, vindictive, idle, debauched, and lacking in remorse—needless to say, Lombroso's opinion of primitive peoples was extremely low. Hall thought Lombroso's pessimism was excessive, disagreed with his extremist position that *all* savages were essentially criminal, and chided him for ignoring that fact they were "mostly virtuous, simple, confiding, light-hearted, amazingly religious and healthful."⁷⁷ What savages did possess, however, were instincts and impulses that *became* "deviant" when exercised in the modern context—if left isolated and to their own devices, primitive man's instincts would not have proven criminal, and it was only when primitives and colonizers clashed that their inferiority became manifest and their abnormality pronounced:

If unspoiled by contact with the advanced wave of civilization, which is too often its refuse, and in which their best is too often unequally matched against our worst, they are mostly virtuous, simple, confiding, affectionate, and peaceful among themselves...the faults we see are usually those we have made.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 334.

⁷⁶ Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, 28.

⁷⁷ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2., 650.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 650.

Lombroso was unsympathetic: “the criminal type results from the aggregate of these anomalies, which render him strange and terrible, not only to the scientific observer, but to ordinary persons who are capable of an impartial judgment.”⁷⁹ But savage criminality, for Hall, was not caused by an innately evil character, but by the imposition of moral and legal standards that were beyond the primitive’s grasp. Western law expected from primitive man obeisance to legal codes and moral principles that so frequently ran counter to his nature. Such impositions were unrealistic, unnatural, and, perhaps, even unfair: “The native to-day is an anomaly in civilization; he cannot understand its significance or adjust himself to its requirements.”⁸⁰ Behaviors that were relatively harmless in their appropriate context became criminal and immoral in the modern world. Hall and Lombroso agreed that primitives had “pre-modern” impulses, but Hall considered Lombroso’s read on savage criminality to be weakened by his failure to understand the problems of evolutionary context.

Hall’s interpretations of savage and adolescent criminality were essentially the same: both possessed natural impulses and struggled to adapt to the constraints that modern civilization imposed upon its members. That children possessed impulses that were essentially “criminal” was an idea Hall inherited from Lombroso, who thought children passed through the same “criminal” stages that savages and born degenerates remained in. It was an important point in Lombroso’s work, as Stephen Jay Gould has observed: “The recapitulatory argument for natural criminality of children is one of the two or three central themes in Lombroso’s fabric—not a mere collateral point.”⁸¹ And it

⁷⁹ Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, 49.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 660.

⁸¹ Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 124.

was a point that Hall incorporated into *Adolescence*, and without the criticism he had for some of the other aspects of Lombroso's work.

Far sounder and more helpful is [Lombroso's] suggestion that normal children often pass through stages of passionate cruelty, laziness, lying, and thievery. He reminds us that their vanity, slang, obscenity, contagious imitativeness, their absence of moral sense, disregard of property, and violence to each other, constitute them criminals in all essential respects, lacking only the strength and insight to make their crime dangerous to the communities in which they live.⁸²

Lombroso's disciple, Enrico Ferri, agreed: "the psychology of the criminal is summed up in a defective resistance to criminal tendencies and temptations, due to that ill-balanced impulsiveness which characterises children and savages."⁸³ For the committed recapitulationist, understanding crime required the study of both children and savages, as both exhibited the earliest forms of the criminal impulse: "Adolescence is the best key to the nature of crime. It is essentially antisocial, selfishness, refusing to submit to the laws of altruism."⁸⁴

Criminals, savages, and juvenile delinquents were conflated into a single category, with each sharing the same essential natures: each was impulsive, unable to delay gratification, and placed their own needs above those of the social whole. The adolescent's natural impulsivity oftentimes clashed with the behaviors and norms expected of him, especially when he acted "unconsciously" in a structured society that so highly valued reflection and restraint: "Many crimes and immoralities of early adolescence," wrote Hall, "are from a blind impulse on which consciousness does not act at all."⁸⁵ As seen in the previous section, impulsivity was also a symptom of insanity and, indeed, the distinction between criminals and lunatics was not precisely drawn. Kraft-

⁸² Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 334-335.

⁸³ Ferri, *Criminal Sociology*, 11.

⁸⁴ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 405.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 284.

Ebing noted, “the dividing line between criminality and insanity is still vague and uncertain.”⁸⁶ Emil Kraepelin considered impulsivity to be a primary trait of both the criminal and the madman, and both suffered from the “diminution of the volitional impulse...characterized by a marked diminution of personal initiative, except in gratification of the lower, selfish, and vegetative impulses, such as greed, gluttony, and sexual desire.”⁸⁷

For Hall, the increase in juvenile criminality was caused by the exercise of natural impulses in an environment that required their subordination—his understanding of youthful deviance was based on both biological and social premises: the *social* demands that society placed on its members were antithetical to the *biological* impulses that were natural to all youth. Hall’s position led him to issue two practical aims concerning juvenile criminality: first, the realization that certain behaviors were “natural” required that adolescent transgressions be indulged, at least to a degree; and, second, that adolescents needed proper guidance to ensure that they develop past the “criminal” stage of human history.

Among the many natural but potentially dangerous tendencies found among adolescents was the “overassertion of individuality.”⁸⁸ An exaggerated ego could manifest itself in antisocial behavior, where selfish aims determined which course of action an individual took. It was a trait common to all criminals:

The welfare and suffering of their fellow-men no longer appeal to them. Even the old bonds of family and friendship are loosened and only maintained by habit. With this lack of interest in all the higher esthetic and ethical relations of civilized life they satisfy their material needs and perform their duties.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Kraft-Ebing, *Text-Book of Insanity*, 25.

⁸⁷ Kraepelin, *Clinical Psychiatry*, 78.

⁸⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 315.

⁸⁹ Kraft-Ebing, *Text-Book of Insanity*, 55.

During the period of maturation, adolescents shared, for a time, those egotistic and impulsive tendencies that were characteristic of savages and criminals, and were equally reluctant delay the gratification of those impulses. “The youth who has been amenable to advice and even suggestion,” wrote Hall, “now becomes obstreperous, recalcitrant, filled with a spirit of opposition.”⁹⁰ In an environment that demanded self-control, the adolescent, like the savage, oftentimes found it difficult to conform and, consequently, sought escape. Trapped in an environment that felt repressive, and tempted by their atavistic urgings to be free, adolescents

long[ed] intensely for the utter abandon of a wilder life, and very characteristic is the frequent discarding of foot and head dress and even garments in the blind instinct to realize again the conditions of primitive man.⁹¹

Hall considered such behavior to be a manifestation of the adolescent’s “truant instinct,” and when it was at its strongest “tying will not prevent it, and where the child feels the impulse to abandon everything and go with the birds, dog, car, circus, clouds, or to see where the road goes, to see what will come next, etc., this may be irresistible and almost epileptic.”⁹²

In the modern context young people were sedentary and stuck in school—at the same time, they were impelled by “an instinctive rebellion against limitations of freedom and unnatural methods of education.”⁹³ The desire to break free from society’s constraints was natural for adolescents, just as savages often resisted the routines of civilization and its institutional restrictions. The need for liberty was deeply engrained in

⁹⁰ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 79-80.

⁹¹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 348.

⁹² Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 376.

⁹³ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 348.

man's consciousness and was part of the phyletic legacy. But, if unrestrained, the urge could unfit a person for society, as it had for many criminals:

Here, then, is an activity of the soul, woven into legends and folk-lore, is discussed in history and science, and affects profoundly the social and domestic life of a people. An instinct that destroys for the time being even the activities that provide for the immediate wants of life, that drives out considerations for home, relatives and friends, that overpowers the sympathetic, the domestic, the home-making spirit of man, that unfits him for static toil and conditions, and impels him to seek a change, the new, strange and untried.⁹⁴

Alexander Chamberlain, a colleague of Hall's, made a similar point:

A savage, a soldier, a lover, a child best of all, knows what it is to be homesick, and to feel that loss of liberty which makes life scarcely worth the living, and for which all the 'advantages' of so-called civilisation are but a mean compensation.⁹⁵

Adolescents, like savages, could not be expected to conform to a society's legal or moral code without difficulty; governing one's behavior in accordance with society's expectations was a skill to be learned and, more importantly, it was a hard one for adolescents to master. What modern criminology required was an awareness of the child's unique nature and an acceptance that "normal" behavior had to be developed, not simply expected. "Thus the problem of criminology for youth can not be based on the principles now recognized for adults."⁹⁶ It was just as problematic to expect sound moral judgments from adolescents as it was to hold primitives to the same standards expected of civilized men: "By nature, children are more or less morally blind, and statistics show that between thirteen and sixteen incorrigibility is between two and three times as great as

⁹⁴ Linus W. Kline, "The Migratory Impulse Vs. Love of Home," *The American Journal of Psychology* 10 (October 1898), 5.

⁹⁵ Chamberlain, *The Child: A Study in the Evolution of Man*, 299.

⁹⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 409.

at any other age.”⁹⁷ If reformers remained unaware of the child’s true nature, then the statistics of juvenile criminality would continue to rise and more institutions of detention would have to be built.

Hall’s commitment to the theory of recapitulation required that the study of juvenile delinquency, like all social ills, be informed by the principles of racial phylogeny. And a historical awareness, based on phylogenetic insight, of the problem of criminality led to two realizations: first, practices outlawed by modern society were once normal, natural, and evolutionarily advantageous; and, second, young people necessarily experienced a period in their lives where “criminal” instincts surfaced. Criminal behavior was evidence of man’s past—its tendencies were atavistic, and the study of criminal practices revealed historical lessons in the same way that anthropological study did. Thus, the study of the criminal, like the study of the savage, could result in an improved self-understanding among the civilized races. It also suggested that criminal activities in the colonial realm should be understood as a natural conflict that arose when one society imposed its moral and legal customs upon another’s: “Race instincts are amenable to primitive custom, and not to the laws of civilization.”⁹⁸ An informed colonial policy, as we will see in the next chapter, would have to come to terms with the fact that civilizing efforts sometimes ran counter to the nature of its subjects.

Criminal impulses dwelled within, explaining why adolescents were not only drawn toward criminal activity but also deeply interested in it:

Vice and crime are so manifold and diversified, so highly colored with genuine human interests, and open such wide fields of originality and differentiation of human varieties, that it is no wonder that the feral traits of man often seem so

⁹⁷ Ibid., 407.

⁹⁸ Edgar James Swift, “Some Criminal Tendencies of Boyhood,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 8 (March 1901), 85.

attractive to children and even to women, compared to the more monotonous, tamed, and toned down humdrum life of good citizenship.⁹⁹

Children on the verge of adolescence were not equipped with the same level of moral behavior that was to be expected from adults, and Hall thought that it was normal for young boys commit infractions: “Morally he should have been through many if not most forms of what parents and teachers commonly call badness.”

He should have fought, whipped and been whipped, used language offensive to the prude and to the prim precisian, been in some scrapes, had something to do with bad, if more with good activities, and been exposed to and already recovering from as many forms of ethical mumps and measles...¹⁰⁰

Indeed, Hall continued, something was “amiss with the lad of ten who is very good, studious, industrious, thoughtful, altruistic, quiet, polite, respectful, obedient, gentlemanly, orderly, always in good toilet, docile to reason, who turns away from stories that reek with gore, prefers adult companionship to that of his mates, refuses all low associates, speaks standard English, or is pious and deeply in love with religious services as the typical maiden teacher or the *à la mode* parent wishes.”¹⁰¹

“Antisocial” behavior, which was perfectly normal in boyhood, would, if retained into adulthood, become pathological; previously “mild” forms of criminality would metastasize and become “depraved.”¹⁰² Indeed, the traits of normal boyhood “naughtiness,” if carried into adulthood would render a person “savage or half-animal”—what was natural for boys was abnormal for adults. Tylor made the point clearly:

⁹⁹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 341-342.

¹⁰⁰ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 452.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 453.

¹⁰² Ibid., 452.

in a sober fact, a Londoner who should attempt to lead the atrocious life which the real may lead with impunity and even respect, would be a criminal only allowed to follow his savage models during his short intervals out of gaol.¹⁰³

In the literature, the adult criminal is eerily similar to Tylor and Lombroso's savages, as well as Hall's naughty boy, which speaks to the fact that criminals were regarded as backwards and childlike. Among the many traits of the habitual criminal, Kraepelin included the inability to "perform exacting, intellectual work," unaffectionate, selfish, egotistic, vain, idle, foolish, possessing "weak sentimentality," impulsive, and vulgar.¹⁰⁴ Hall also found in adult criminals a host of juvenile attributes: "Criminals are much like overgrown children—egoistic, foppish, impulsive, gluttonous, blind to the rights of others."¹⁰⁵

Hall's understanding of man's criminal legacy, then, allowed him to promote an attitude toward young people that was indulgent—he embraced the young person's waywardness. In a sense, Hall's work liberated young people, for it provided them with a good deal of leeway in a society that was often oppressive. At the same time, however, phyletic explanations of criminality reinforced ideas of the essential "badness" of young people—recapitulatory logic concluded that all young people were, at some point in their development, overtaken by criminal impulses. It is likely that the second part of Hall's theory had more lasting impact than the first—ironically, *Adolescence* may have reinforced the very attitudes toward children that it was hoping to change.

¹⁰³ E.B. Tylor, *The Origins of Culture: Primitive Culture, Volume One* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958 [1871]), 31,

¹⁰⁴ Kraepelin, *Clinical Psychiatry*, 515-520.

¹⁰⁵ Hall, *Adolescence, Vol. I*, 338.

III. Sexual Deviance

Adolescence was a revolutionary work in that it positioned the developing adolescent along a number of different evolutionary frameworks; at the same time, however, there was much about the book that was traditional. Historian Jeffrey P. Moran, who has written on the history of adolescent sexuality, noted that Hall's work was very much in step with the moral climate of the day: "he employed almost exclusively the traditional materials of Victorian sexual respectability [and he] placed chastity and self-denial directly at the center of his interpretation."¹⁰⁶ Hall's biographer, Dorothy Ross, agreed, noting that Hall's sexual views fell very much in line with Victorian attitudes: "Hall's idealization of sexual intercourse was only a more enthusiastic and positive rendering of the doctrine propounded by guardians of Victorian respectability, that physical love, to be permissible, had to be hallowed by respectable ends beyond itself. As such it was typical of many reformers of sex in America during this period."¹⁰⁷ Historian Bryan Strong has shown that the idea of sexual repression was part and parcel of the nineteenth-century world, influencing many of society's other values:

Because repressed sexuality was believed to provide the force for creating values, chastity and sexual restraint were directly related to the middle-class constellation of values that included work, industry, good habits, piety, and noble ideals. Indeed, without sexual repression it was believed impossible or such values to exist in an ideal character. If a man were pure, he would be frugal, hard working, temperate, and governed by habit. If, on the other hand, he were impure, he would also be a spendthrift, disposed to speculation, whiskey-drinking, and ruled by his impulses.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Jeffrey P. Moran, *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20th Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 14-15.

¹⁰⁷ Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist As Prophet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 329.

¹⁰⁸ Bryan Strong, "Ideas of the Early Sex Education Movement in America, 1890-1920," *History of Education Quarterly* 2 (Summer 1972), 130.

Medical men considered the inability to control one's sexual impulse to be not only a moral failing, but also a psychiatric disorder. Kraft-Ebing diagnosed patients suffering from "hyperesthesia" as being unable to inhibit the sexual drive, resulting in the "reckless expression" of sexual desires:

[he] desires sexual gratification at any price, and as a substitute may abandon himself to onanism or sodomy. The nymphomaniacal woman seeks to attract men by exhibition or lustful gestures, and at the sight of them becomes extremely excited sexually and may resort to onanism or 'imitatio coitus.'¹⁰⁹

Dorothy Ross and Jeffrey Mann are correct: G. Stanley Hall was no sexual iconoclast and his opinions on the subject were properly "Victorian." Masturbation was "one of the very saddest of all the aspects of human weakness" and "the most perfect type of individual vice and sin," while unrestrained sexual activity led to racial degeneration: "The ascendant individual family or stock is the one that refuses to yield in excess to the temptation of the flesh, and the descendants are those whose instincts for selfish gratification preponderate over those of race-conservatism."¹¹⁰ But Hall's sexual conservatism was not wholly in step with his times, for he promoted open and honest discussion of sexual matters; this constituted a departure from the nineteenth-century cultish commitment to silence. Sexual education at the time of *Adolescence's* publication, writes one historian, was nonexistent: "The traditional method of educating children concerning sex was not to educate them at all and to allow the silence regarding sex to indicate the necessity of repressing its expression."¹¹¹ But Hall insisted that the importance of the subject forbade silence and he advocated that problems such as homosexuality and masturbation, both of which were epidemic among the adolescent

¹⁰⁹ Kraft-Ebing, *Text-Book of Insanity*, 82.

¹¹⁰ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, 432; 452; 438.

¹¹¹ Strong, "Ideas of the Early Sex Education Movement in America," 135.

population, be discussed candidly. And though problems like masturbation were “painful to consider,” the traditional model of non-education had surely failed. “Until recently [the topic of masturbation] has been met on the one hand with either prudery and painstaking reticence or treated in terms of exaggerated horror, as in the ‘scare’ and quack literature.”¹¹² Sex needed studying and, to an extent, it was worthy of celebration.

Predictably, sex concerned adolescents more than anyone else, for puberty marked the period when the sexual impulse awoke and when the individual was most susceptible to morbid development. Thus Hall plunged into the subject with great enthusiasm, treating his readers to some of the most colorful passages found in

Adolescence:

As this vast subject looms up to the psychologist and he begins to catch glimpses of its long-neglected wealth and beauty overgrown with foul and noxious fungoids and haunted by all the evil spirits that curse human life...he realizes that it is his preeminent prerogative and duty, from which it would be base cowardice to shrink, to sound a cry of warning in terms plain enough if possible to shock both quacks and prudes, who have, the one perverted, and the other obscured, the plain path of life for adolescence.¹¹³

Curiously, however, Hall’s strategy for investigating adolescent sexuality deviated somewhat from the method he employed in examining youthful insanity and criminality. In all three cases he was concerned with abnormal development, but his treatment of adolescent sexual pathology did not rely on evidence that demonstrated the presence of morbidities in primitive society—savages were not claimed to be obsessive about masturbation, prone to homosexual orgies, or extremely loose in their ways. Hall thought that primitive culture often gave sex an excessive role in customs, rites, and mythologies, but he did not consider those groups to be any more perverse than modern man. An

¹¹² Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, 432.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 413.

opposite conclusion could have easily been reached, however, as the anthropological record was peppered with characterizations of low sexual morality among savage groups—quoting from two volumes found in Hall’s bibliography:

The chastity of women does not appear to be held in much estimation [by the Andaman Islanders]. The husband will, for a trifling present, lend his wife to a stranger, and the loan may be protracted by increasing the value of the present.¹¹⁴

Some priestesses have as many as half-a-dozen men in their train at one time, and may, on great occasions, be seen walking in state, followed by them. Their life is one continual round of debauchery and sensuality, and when excited by the dance they frequently abandon themselves to the wildest excesses. Such a career of profligacy soon leaves its impress upon them, and their countenances are generally remarkable for an expression of the grossest sensuality.¹¹⁵

In light of such “evidence,” it was surprising that Hall did not utilize it—linking savage sexual degeneracy to the problem of juvenile sexuality would have made perfect recapitulatory sense; the argument was begging to be made. But Hall did not consider the savage’s sense of sexual morality to be lagging significantly behind civilized man’s. In considering masturbation, for instance, Hall offered his readers this surprising conclusion: “the whole literature of the subject attests that...the Occident has little, if any, advantage over the sad records of the Orient, and that civilized man is on the whole, to say the least, no better, if not far worse, in this respect than his savage brother.”¹¹⁶ Nor were primitives necessarily lacking in sexual propriety, as one of Hall’s sources from Philippines made clear:

one might imagine that morality would be at a low ebb among a people whose women are almost without modesty, and where all alike agree that there is no future life nor any sure retribution for evil deeds in this. Nothing could be further from the truth. Such a thing as a faithless wife is almost unknown.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Quoted in W.I. Thomas, “Sex in Primitive Morality,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 4 (May 1899), 786.

¹¹⁵ Ellis, *The Tshi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa*, 122.

¹¹⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 435.

¹¹⁷ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 663.

And, frequently, when Hall found that sexual vice did exist among primitive groups he attributed its cause to the influence of white settlers, who mistreated native women and spread venereal diseases. “The barbarities of trappers and the villainies of fur traders and the vices of borderers are mainly responsible for the present bad character of the Indians.”¹¹⁸

Hall relied heavily on the work of Havelock Ellis, the British psychologist who studied sex from an evolutionary point of view and paid careful attention to the sexual practices of savages. Ellis was quite liberal for his day and his multi-volume effort *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* was extremely graphic—not at all typical of the period. Ellis was a progressive influence on Hall’s work, and it is likely that his high opinion of savage sexual morality came from Ellis, whose extensive researches did not find lower cultures to be sexually depraved. On the topic of homosexuality, Ellis noted that it “is at least as marked in civilization as it is in savagery.”¹¹⁹ He also found, as Hall would, that masturbation was practiced “among the people of nearly every race of which we have any intimate knowledge” and did not consider it be a defect that was peculiar to primitive groups. In fact, thought Ellis, it was quite possible that “auto-eroticism” was increasing with civilization, caused in part by the many modern apparatuses that stimulated sexual feelings, including hobby horses, climbing poles, sewing machines, bicycles, and tightly laced clothing: “I refer to the effects that, naturally or unnaturally, may be produced by many of the objects and implements of daily life that do not normally come in direct

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 690.

¹¹⁹ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume Two: Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1920 [1901]).

contact with the sexual organs.”¹²⁰ Despite its causes, both Hall and Ellis called for a more balanced discussion concerning the dangers of masturbation, and both were interested in putting to rest the many myths that terrorized youth: “The brain is not literally drained away; dementia, idiocy, palsy, and sudden death are not imminent, nor is there any peculiar infallible expression, attitude, or any other manifestation instantly recognizable by experts.”¹²¹

The bulk of Hall’s discussion on sex focused on masturbation and nocturnal emissions, and the method, as mentioned, was a departure from the rest of *Adolescence*. Sexual problems were dealt with in a rather technical way and with an eye toward developing “curative” strategies. Specific abnormalities were not correlated with phyletic precedents. There were, however, general similarities between savage and adolescent sexuality. In particular, each devoted an extraordinary amount of time and energy to matters sexual. Adolescents were consumed by sex: “My distinguished teacher, Ludwig, the leading physiologist of the time, once told me that he thought that for some years about nine-tenths of the psychic processes of adolescents centered in sex and its functions.”¹²² Hall also thought that the sexual instinct was more pronounced in primitive societies than among civilized cultures, as evidenced by the strong sexual content in primitive myths and religious rites. Modern societies, thought Hall, tended to sublimate the sexual instinct more thoroughly, and sex did not as often rise to the surface of modern life. The phyletic record seemed to prove the theory, as history and anthropology provided “abundant evidence that the race has had a sexual consciousness more all-

¹²⁰ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume One: The Evolution of Modesty; The Phenomena of Sexual Periodicity; Auto-eroticism* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1920 [1900]), 120.

¹²¹ Hall, *Adolescence, Vol. 1*, 439.

¹²² Hall, *Adolescence, Vol. 2*, 97.

dominating and pervasive than now appears, and many a conception in nearly if not quite all religions, primitive, ethnic, or Christian, shows many traces of having been slowly sublimated and refined out of these bases.”¹²³ Recapitulation suggested to Hall that adolescents would have to follow the same course—a deep interest in sex followed by its sublimation in higher ideals, such as love, art, and altruism. The key point, however, was that Hall was referring to *interest* in sexuality, and not to its practice.

Hall did not portray adolescents as wild, sexual beasts prone to orgies and driven by an insatiable sexual passion; nor were they chaste—sex was central to the adolescent experience: “Neither the psychology nor the pedagogy of adolescence can be treated without careful consideration of the whole problem of sex.”¹²⁴ As with other impulses that could become morbid if not properly developed, Hall issued the same recommendations when it came to sex: the child’s exhibition of desires and needs that may have seemed unsavory to adults were the phyletic manifestations of impulses rooted deep in the race’s consciousness. Premature suppression would lead to arrested development, while giving them too much leeway would ensure pathological development. The great problem of adolescent sexuality lay in resolving the tension between the young person’s deep-seated urge to express his sexual side and to explore sexual themes while living in a context that was highly repressive:

It is, therefore, one of the cardinal sins against youth to repress healthy thoughts of sex at the proper age, because thus the mind itself is darkened and its wings clipped for many of the higher intuitions, which the supreme muse of common sense at this its psychologic moment ought to give. If youth are left to themselves and the contagion of most environments, this mental stimulus takes a low turn toward lewd imaginations and vile conceptions, which undermine the strength of virtue, and instead of helping upward and making invulnerable against all

¹²³ Ibid., 99-100.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 109.

temptation, it makes virtue safe only in its absence and prepares the way for a fall, when its full stress is first felt.¹²⁵

Left alone, youth were likely to be tempted to engage in sexual experimentation, which could be detrimental to their development. Adolescent sexual activity, which rarely served the purpose of procreation, was thought to greatly tax both body and mind. Hall subscribed to the popular nineteenth-century belief that the semen possessed regenerative power, and that when

not expended [it was] absorbed by the blood. The reabsorption of these seminal cells enabled the young male to develop his body...If the physically mature man refrained from sexual excesses and remained continent, then the semen was absorbed by the blood and was carried to the brain where it was 'coined into new thoughts'...This explanation, however much disguised as science, in reality reflected the dominant morality since its actual function was to offer positive rewards for sexual repression.¹²⁶

Hall believed that sperm had the power to destroy disease-causing toxins that lived in the blood and that its loss was a "drain upon the system." Reabsorbed sperm "freshened" nerve tissue, while its expenditure led to weakness, depression, physical and nervous exhaustion, and a host of other health problems.¹²⁷ Consequently,

The most rigid chastity of fancy, heart, and body is physiologically and psychologically as well as ethically imperative till maturity is complete on into the twenties...Restraint is now true manhood and makes races ascendant and not descendant, while from the plant world up, prematurity, that goes too early to seed, means caducity. The perfected adolescent will now have systematized his ideals.¹²⁸

If the theory was true, then the prevalence of sexual excessiveness among primitive groups would have presented Hall and others with a difficult challenge—if all savages

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Strong, "Ideas of the Early Sex Education Movement in America," 130.

¹²⁷ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 441-443.

¹²⁸ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 120-121.

were sexually degenerate then the race as a whole would never have had the physical or mental energy to evolve. Whereas criminal or mental “abnormalities” had once been evolutionarily advantageous, sexual perversions had not—the Victorian science of sexuality did not allow for a salacious period of race history. Consequently, for the theory of recapitulation, adolescents never inhabited a period of all-consuming perversion. But, while sexual degeneracy may not have been a historical problem, it was a present one. Sexual deviance, then, was envisioned differently from other forms of moral abnormality—the focus of its examination lay on the individual and the future, rather than on the race and the past. Hall’s studies on sex do not flow with the rest of *Adolescence*.

The theory of recapitulation notwithstanding, sexual excess was still a problem facing adolescents—as seen in previous sections, young people struggled to restrain themselves and oftentimes found it difficult to control their impulses. Consequently, sexual pathologies were statistically more likely to develop at this age than at any other: “I believe that it is in this stage of development that sexual perversions of certain classes are rooted.”¹²⁹ Most perversions, thought Hall, were manifested in fetishistic peculiarities in which the sexual feelings were assigned to something (or someone) for which nature had not intended—at adolescence, he wrote, before young people had firm command of their desires and drives, “the sexual glow may come to be associated with almost any act or object whatever and give it an unique and otherwise inexplicable prominence in the life of the individual.”¹³⁰ And later in *Adolescence*: “In the degenerate soul, the whole energy of love may center upon some single trait which may thus come to play a

¹²⁹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, 286.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

disproportionate or even demiurgic part in the life of sex.”¹³¹ Again, Hall could have examined the fetishistic practices of savage groups, as many anthropologists did, but he refrained from doing so—once more, sexual perversion was explained as a degenerative process, and not an evolutionary one; and sexual deviance was an ontogenetic problem, not a phylogenetic one. In a telling passage, Hall even advocated Freud’s theory that sexual neuroses were rooted in early childhood experiences and traumas, a stance that had little value from a recapitulatory point of view.¹³²

What did separate savage from civilized men was the level to which they could sublimate their sexual urges. Higher societies redirected their sexual energies to broader feelings of “love”—expressed through art, in caring for the young and infirm, in serving the community, and, later, in a “love of the race” as a whole. Ultimately, the most advanced societies would be attain an all-encompassing love that knew no bounds:

The final stage is love of being or of all that exists, visible and invisible. The ontological passion culminates thus in a mystic devotion to the absolute in which self is forever merged and swallowed up, and the mind and life find their supreme virtue in anticipating and accepting with joy their inevitable final fate.¹³³

But, again, the problem of recapitulation presented itself, and Hall was forced to admit that “perhaps no individual or race passes through all these stages in the phenomenology of love, for neither a single personal nor even one ethnic soul is large enough to do justice to them all.”¹³⁴ But the lesson remained clear: sublimation was necessary to develop into something higher and those who submitted to sexual temptation were certain to miss out on much that life had to offer: “Alas for those in whom this experience is mutilated by

¹³¹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 215.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 121.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

premature or excessive experience in Venusberg, for these can never know the highest, largest, and deepest things of life!”¹³⁵ Sexual deviance may not have been part of man’s history, but its increase ensured that the race’s future would be greatly affected by it. Sexual perversion and pathology could destroy the evolutionary progress that had taken so long to achieve, resulting in a weakened and degenerate race. But, with the proper guidance, G. Stanley Hall’s adolescent could play a special role in ensuring that this did not happen—it was a heavy burden to carry.

Conclusion

Adolescence was not without contradictions, a point acknowledged by historian Joseph F. Kett: “The doctrine [of recapitulation] justified the prolongation of adolescence, the removal of pressures for accelerated development, although it was also a source of some repressive conclusions.”¹³⁶ Kett’s observation is an important one. In *Adolescence* Hall intended to demonstrate that young people possessed a nature that was different from the adult’s and thus could not be expected to conform to the stringent regulations of modern, civilized life—in that sense the book was a program for the liberation of the American adolescent. But in allying young people with savages, criminals, lunatics, and sexual misfits, Hall demonstrated that the adolescent’s nature was, essentially, a deviant one—in that sense *Adolescence* was a justification for the oppression of young people. After all, none of the adolescent’s recapitulatory siblings was permitted to live free and unmolested; each was institutionalized, considered to be a menace to society, and forced

¹³⁵ Ibid., 124.

¹³⁶ Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in American 1790 to the Present* (New York, Basic Books, 1977), 218.

to become “civilized.” In many ways, then, *Adolescence* was a dangerous book, even if that hadn’t been the intention of its author. What remains to be seen, however, was the influence that Hall’s ideas had on the education and treatment of young people. Did his work help to liberate adolescents, or did it contribute to their subjugation? The final two chapters seek to address that important question.

Chapter Four

The Child Study Movement and the Application of Recapitulatory Science

Child-study is a life-process.

*T.P. Bailey (1900)*¹

I. Child Study and the Dissemination of a New Science

By the early 1890s child study had become a professionalized discipline, insofar as it possessed the trappings of a specialized field: academic chairs, a particular cant, private meetings, and selective journals. But in terms of credentialing, another measure of professionalization, it lagged behind many other disciplines. Practically any person, at any time, could become a child studier—no certifications or licenses were required to conduct studies upon children and no centralized regulatory agency existed to ensure that those studies were properly carried out. The movement's leaders, who sought to elevate child study to the same status as medicine or law, were sometimes made self-conscious and insecure by the fact that their discipline attracted amateurs. But, humbling as the presence of non-specialists may have been, their participation was necessary if child study was to flourish. Child study was not designed to be a mere academic exercise. It was a movement with ambitious practical goals and sought to reform the way normal people—parents and teachers—interacted with their charges. This required that child study be inclusive, and though a hint of academic snobbery was always evident in the

¹ T.P. Bailey, "Some Difficulties of Child-Study," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1900), 583.

publications of university men, they clearly realized that success depended on the cooperation of a broad range of individuals.

To enlist allies, a public relations and marketing campaign was waged to familiarize and sell child study to the nonacademic world; public familiarity with child study was essential if the movement was to take root in homes and schools. Thus the movement's journal of record, the *Pedagogical Seminary*, though a specialized academic publication, was also an organ that sought to attract university outsiders. The *Seminary* led a campaign of conversion that attempted to proselytize those in the university as well as school administrators, teacher educators, teachers themselves, and even parents. It also sought to inform the public by making vast amounts of complex scholarly information available and accessible. To this end, Hall marketed the journal as a kind of digest that would provide casual readers with summaries of recently published child study and educational literature; condensed within one of the early editions were "17,000 pages of carefully selected and recent educational literature" boiled down to manageable proportions for those who lacked the time and ability to keep up with an expanding body of professional literature.²

The colonels of the child study movement had a vested interest in keeping the public informed about the goings-on of the movement—familiarity led to acceptance, and acceptance to implementation. The movement's success depended on the enlistment of amateur and semi-professional partners; real-world practitioners who could help academics achieve their important goals.³ The business of child study was, quite simply, far too large an operation for university-based experts to go it alone. They hadn't the time

² G. Stanley Hall, "Editorial," *Pedagogical Seminary* 2 (No. 2, 1892), 185.

³ On the "semi-professional" status of teachers see Amitai Etzioni, *The Semi-Professions and Their Organization: Teachers, Nurses, Social Workers* (New York: The Free Press, 1969).

to analyze *and* collect data, develop policy recommendations *and* implement them; consequently, they came to rely heavily on those who spent the most time with children: parents and teachers. Necessity required a mixing of the educational ranks, which generated a good deal of cooperation and fluidity in the movement—mothers organized and presented at conferences, teachers collected data for university professors, and normal school principals worked in concert with school superintendents. The movement’s power, however, always remained centralized: orders and fiats were issued from above and the movement’s agenda was set by an elite group of university men.

Atop the child study pyramid sat G. Stanley Hall and his colleagues at Clark University. From his privileged position as the President of Clark and editor of the *Pedagogical Seminary*, Hall portrayed child study as a cure to a very real crisis, one that threatened to undo civilization itself—his rhetoric infused into the movement a sense of urgency and moral obligation. In Hall’s view, America’s school children were under attack, underserved by an educational system that was dangerous and harmful because it was wholly ignorant of the developmental aspects of child-life. Hall promoted his agenda in language that was dramatic and hyperbolic and his writings were crafted to strike the reader’s emotional chords, hoping to convince his audience to take quick and decisive action. From the second number of the *Seminary*:

Indeed the mutilation which so powerful an engine as the modern school *may* inflict upon the tender souls and bodies of our children, and thus upon our entire national future, is too little realized. Let us hope it will not bring a sick or sterile epoch upon the world as Catholicism is sometimes said to have had caused the dark ages... The only safety lies in the study of and better adaptation to the nature and needs of childhood.⁴

⁴ G. Stanley Hall, “Editorial,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 1 (No. 2, 1891), 121.

Child study was marketed as a scientific undertaking that would benefit any group that interacted with children. And to promulgate this message, the movement's leaders crafted a program of dissemination that broadcast across the entire educational spectrum—the aim was to generate such a buzz that any and all groups involved with the instruction and rearing of children would be attracted to the solutions offered up by Hall and his colleagues.

The work of many different parties necessitated a careful division of labor, to ensure that each had a role to play in the movement. Those roles were carefully defined by the movement's leaders and orchestrated into a coherent whole. University professors, naturally, stood at the top of the child study hierarchy and were responsible for formulating a body of scientific knowledge that outlined the child's developmental needs as determined by researches in the recapitulatory sciences. Below them were normal- and public school officials, who would train teachers and spearhead reform in professional development and classroom instruction. Teachers followed, and they were expected to adapt their pedagogical techniques and lesson plans to the movement's suggestions. Finally, parents were called into action, with the hope that children would be reared in the home using strategies that were harmonious with the progressive techniques employed by a school informed by the findings of child study. The movement was splintered into a number of different factions, but there remained a great deal of cohesion. Each had its own particular methods of inquiry, social and scientific rationales, and relationship with the child, but they were all to work to the same end. Moreover, each group depended on the next—university professors set the agenda for normal school principals and other administrators; those groups, in turn, dictated the role that teachers would play in the

movement; finally, teachers oversaw the involvement and education of parental child studiers. The result was a well-oiled and consensual movement that was able to assert itself across a wide section of society.

University professors stood at the fore, and the ranking member of this elite corps was the psychologist G. Stanley Hall. Speaking at the National Education Association's annual meeting in 1905, the president of the Department of Child Study said in his address that "no one before Dr. Hall had taken up child-life scientifically, and by more thorough and extended investigations into the psychic and psychical life of the child [which] has revealed to us the nature and activities and phases of development of the child's mind."⁵ Hall was something of a legend in these matters, and rightly so. His seminal essay "The Contents of Children's Minds on Entering School," published in 1883 and researched for a series of Harvard lectures, became the model for scientific pedagogy and the official beginning of the child study movement in America.⁶ After an indecisive and slow start in the academic world, Hall, forty at the time of the essay's publication, rose meteorically: in 1884 he was appointed full professor of pedagogy and psychology at Johns Hopkins, a premier research institution; in 1887 he became a co-founder of *The American Journal of Psychology* and a year later he accepted the presidency of Clark University, a newly endowed graduate institution that stressed research and scientific investigation. In 1891 Hall founded and became sole editor of the *Pedagogical Seminary*, the child study movement's official organ; and, finally, in 1904

⁵ E.G. Lancaster, "President's Address, Department of Child Study," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1905), 709.

⁶ See, for example, Dorothy E. Bradbury, "The Contribution of the Child Study Movement to Child Psychology," *Psychological Bulletin* 24 (January 1937), 21; Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 37. "The Contents of Children's Minds" was republished in *Pedagogical Seminary* 1 (No. 2, 1893): 139-173.

Hall published his magnum opus, *Adolescence*, the culmination of two decades' commitment to child study. Clark, under Hall's tenure, promoted child study tirelessly, provided the movement with institutional leadership, and helped to ensure that the development of the new discipline adhered to rigorous academic standards.

University professors, "eminent scientists" who sought to elevate the study of children to the same prominence enjoyed by other scientific professions, served as the movement's leaders.⁷ These scientists organized themselves under Hall, many working by his side at Clark University and publishing in his journal. In the *Seminary's* second number, Hall noted that child study would have to imitate the other academic disciplines if the project was to be taken seriously: "The entire modern world is coming to be more and more in the hands of experts and specialists educated to the very frontier of their subjects," he wrote, imploring educators to follow suit.⁸ If the primary role of modern research universities such as Hopkins and Clark was to train specialized academics, then Hall's contribution to that end would be the development of scholars whose expertise on children was unmatched. It was, for him, an almost holy project:

It is the Universities which largely determine whether a land is cursed by a fictitious, superstitious, half-cultured clergy, or blessed by ministers of divine Truth who understand and believe the doctrines they teach, who can attract and enlarge the learned...⁹

Should the truth be found, and Hall expected that it would, the *Pedagogical Seminary* would spread it to the rest of the world, debunking entrenched myths about childhood and initiating a new and enlightened age in education. Gathered in the *Seminary's* pages

⁷ Earl Barnes, "Should Original Investigation Be Required in Some Branches of Child-Study for the Doctor of Pedagogy Degree?" *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1893), 446.

⁸ Hall, "Editorial," *Pedagogical Seminary* 1 (No. 2, 1891), 120.

⁹ G. Stanley Hall, "Editorial," *Pedagogical Seminary* 1 (No. 3, 1891), 316.

would be the latest scientific data on the development of children; it was to be a journal of science “which cannot fail to be definite and meaty, and will not go to seed in dogmas, formulae, and abstractions.”¹⁰ Hall outlined the duties that the professorial, university-based branch of child studiers were to perform: the development of a “science” of education based on the study of children and influenced by recapitulatory science; to supply leadership to the rest of the educational world; and to disseminate their findings in university course offerings, at professional conferences, and in publications, both scholarly and popular. An educated and expert leadership would make converts to the movement by elevating child study to the same level as the university’s other scientific programs.

At the heart of the university-based program was the goal of creating unity and consensus among the rank and file, for it would be difficult to implement reform in the face of dissent and conflict. Child studiers hoped to bring order to an educational system they thought was in disarray: an “anarchy that reigns supreme in the domain of general pedagogy,” wrote one, caused by a “collection of bitterly opposed sects, each of which believes that salvation of the world lays upon its own dogmas and that all other pedagogy is a delusion and snare.”¹¹ But an objective science could calm the educational waters, and it was the university’s job, thought many in the movement, to develop that science:

let it be frankly admitted that a scientific study of childhood, which shall give results so reliable that we may accept them and abide by them, must be carried out by expert investigators, whose schooling, training, high aims, and facilities for the work shall command our acceptance of the results of their investigations.¹²

¹⁰ G. Stanley Hall, “Editorial,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 1 (No. 1, 1891), vi.

¹¹ E.W. Scripture, “Education as a Science,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 2 (No. 1, 1892), 114.

¹² Anna Buckbee, “Methods of Teaching Child Study in Normal Schools,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1904), 790.

The university's work, when "purified of deceit and error, is rounded to completeness, culture will have abandoned much useless luggage, the chasm between instruction and education will be less disastrous, and all the highest and most sacred human ideals will not be lost or dimmed but will become nearer and more real."¹³ Scientific child study promised to usher in an era of pedagogical truth and harmony, but it would take a highly trained corps of specialized experts to accomplish this task. Through such rhetoric, millennial and evangelical in tone, the professional child studiers created an aura of crisis and urgency. But, at the same time, they promoted their movement as the solution. Success depended on communicating those messages to the rest of the educational community, and they did so vigorously.

The first line of attack was with school administrators and normal school faculty, the movement's lieutenants. Both groups were assigned considerably powerful roles in the promotion of child study and their primary role was to act as the intermediaries between the development of theory and its practical implementation. As one theoretician noted, knowing well that school administrators would ultimately decide whether or not his work would reach the classrooms, "Inside the school are the children; outside are the sciences to help; at the door stands the schoolmaster."¹⁴ School administrators controlled access to teachers and students and child studiers had to convince those officials to allow them into the schools they were attempting to reform. But administrators possessed other powers as well: an informed superintendent or principal could arouse interest in child study by familiarizing teachers with its message and by allowing them to pursue their

¹³ Hall, "Editorial," *Pedagogical Seminary* 1 (No. 3, 1891), 325.

¹⁴ William L. Bryan, "Child Study—Systematic and Unsystematic," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1895), 415.

own investigations. Child study experts urged school administrators to give teachers the freedom that the discipline required:

Complete success, both with the teachers of the present and the future, will depend on the independent, enthusiastic, self-active investigations of the teachers themselves. *They must be made free from the blight of domination and inspired with self-reverence.* They must be originaive as well as imaginative, in order that they may grow.¹⁵

Another ensured his readers that “everything which discourages true growth and originality in teachers is wrong,” suggesting to school officials that they grant teachers the autonomy to conduct investigations and reform their teaching techniques according to the findings of child study.¹⁶ But administrators were encouraged to take active roles within the movement as well; its promoters promised that a school official informed by the findings of child study would be a more effective one:

A superintendent or principal, with keen perceptions exercised or developed by practice, will, in one swift glance, often detect hidden factors, and vastly increases the probabilities of giving the correct advice to a nonplussed teacher, besides gaining increased respect from teacher and scholar for power to penetrate character and detect motives.¹⁷

G. Stanley Hall perceived two major means of advancing and reforming education in line with the findings of child study. The first spoke directly to school administrators and focused on the “administrative-logical” processes of schooling—here administrative officials would direct change through restructuring, reorganization, and campaigning for legislative reform. The other method of reform, focusing on the “internal or bio-psychological” processes, was the responsibility of theoreticians and practitioners. It

¹⁵ James L. Hughes, “How May the Results of Child Study Be Best Embodied in Methods of Teaching in Elementary Schools?” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1897), 290. My emphasis.

¹⁶ G.W.A. Luckey, “Practical Lines of Child Study for the Average Teacher,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1897), 830.

¹⁷ Edgar Dubsshimer, “New York School of Pedagogy,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1894), 1003.

focused on the procedural aspects of education, or the reformation of classroom practices based on the findings of child study.¹⁸ Hall's vision required that both arms of the reform process work in tandem, ensuring that theory and practice sought the same ends. Hall clearly understood the complexities involved in a reform effort that sought to overhaul the entire educational system and knew that success depended upon a shared commitment between the various participants involved. In a movement that divided its labor, cooperation was important, especially among administrators who ultimately controlled access to the schools. Principals and superintendents were to be the "directors" of the movement, performing the "mechanical work" of allowing access and promoting implementation, and Hall sought to ally the administrative arm with the rest of the movement's participants.¹⁹

Public school officials were mentioned frequently in the child study literature, and though they did play a role in the discipline's meetings and publications, far more attention was given to the faculty and administration of the normal schools. The movement invested greater hope in the next generation of teachers, was far more vigorous in its appeal to those who oversaw their education, and spoke more frequently to them through publications. The child studiers viewed in-service teachers with suspicion. They were thought to be less malleable than pre-service teachers, fast in their ways, skeptical, and with "little time, opportunity, or capacity" to relearn their art; besides, the observations and generalizations of poorly trained, in-service teachers were often

¹⁸ G. Stanley Hall, "Editorial," *Pedagogical Seminary* 3 (October 1895), 185.

¹⁹ Mabel Clare Williams, "Laboratory Tests as A Means of Child Study," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1904), 775.

“lacking intelligent direction” and were likely to “come to but little.”²⁰ It is interesting that the movement did not devise a training program for teachers who already had control of a classroom, but not surprising—logistically it would have been very difficult.

The training of pre-service teachers, however, commanded more attention and offered greater promise. And normal school faculty, compared with school officials who worked with practicing teachers, were given the greater role in spreading child study. School officials only had to demonstrate their commitment by providing access; it would not be their job to develop child study as a science. Their contribution was different from that expected of normal school faculty, whose primary contribution would be the transmission of a “science” of childhood that would influence the classroom practices of prospective teachers. Both groups acted as intermediaries between the development of theory and the implementation of those ideas into practice, earning for each specialized places within the movement. Normal school personnel would transmit to future teachers the science that had been discovered and worked out at the university. Faculty and students in the normal school would teach and study the new “science,” but its experts made it clear that their contributions were to be limited.

Even though it was imperative that future teachers be educated in the science of child study, child studiers always made it clear that teachers were not scientists. And normal school faculty, careful not to tread on the ground of their university colleagues, agreed. Said one normal school principal, the “teacher in training or in actual service can be interested in the advancement of child study as a science only incidentally.”²¹ A major

²⁰ M.V. O’Shea, “Method and Scope of Child Study for Teachers-In-Service,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1895), 924.

²¹ John G. Thompson, “Child Study in the Training of Teachers,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1898), 918.

concern of child-science at the university level was the discovery of generalizations that explained the developmental history of the human race as a whole, which in turn led to the “discovery” the child-soul and the reformulation of method and content. This ambitious program necessitated collecting and collating vast amounts of data, a familiarity with all other work done in the field, and a thorough knowledge of many different disciplines, including biology, anthropology, and psychology. “Child science,” as defined at the university level, was deemed inappropriate for teacher education programs, which focused primarily on the practical application of the movement’s pedagogical findings.

Science was actually anathema to a teacher’s education, for the scientist’s cold and unfeeling eye was not appropriate in the classroom. Therefore, love for the child, rather than a love of science, was advocated and cultivated within the normal school program of studies. Child study at the classroom level meant unraveling the mystery of each individual—not in trying to understand how the study of children informed the study of the human race. For teachers, child study was an undertaking that focused on individuals and not on conceptual, phylogenetic generalizations: “the teacher’s chief interest is not in the child of five years of age, nor the child of the first grade, but in Mary Smith, Johnny Brown, and Susan Jones.”²² This was an important differentiation in the roles of child scientists: the university scientists would unveil the nature of children as a whole, while the teacher would uncover the individual’s nature. University men worked with a set of masculine and scientific tools—objectivity, precision, logical explanations—while teachers carried a feminine toolbox that contained empathy, love, and concern. The kind of child scientist that the normal school nurtured was, in fact, not a scientist as all:

²² Ibid.

I believe that those who study boys and girls for the love of child study, for the love of science, rather than for the love of children, will in time be obliged to confess that they have lost the power to appreciate the highest and the best that is in the child.²³

Child study in the normal school continued to wear the label “science,” and though it did carry some attributes that were “scientific,” it was, for the most part, a domesticated science where particular methodologies “were always of less importance than the interest, sympathy, intelligence, [and] persistence which the teacher brings to the work.”²⁴ Still, it was an important role: academic generalizations could be made only after teachers had supplied them with enough individual data—knowledge of the individual, supplied by teachers, allowed child study experts to formulate broad conclusions.

The questions relevant to the normal school curriculum were sometimes ambitious—“what does [the child] demand in school environment and equipment, in the physical life of the schools, in curriculum, method, and organization, to give him sound development and make him more efficient?”—but, for the most part, the concern lay in a more basic question: what does *this* particular child need in order to learn?²⁵ To answer the question did not require a bag of methodological tricks or scientific premises, but a distinct attitude and a particular way of thinking, acting, and being. The appropriate role for the normal school was to awaken interest and zeal among its students. Learning this “science” depended more on the learner’s attitude and less on scientific methods, and the end result would not illustrate immutable truths so much as it would fit the classroom to the needs of its members: “the main impulse which sustains our understanding comes not

²³ Ibid., 721.

²⁴ Gertrude Edmund, “Child Study in Normal and Training Schools,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1899), 1034.

²⁵ Margaret K. Smith, “Child Study in Connection With the Professional Training of Teachers,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1893), 714.

from a conviction of the direct service that it may be capable of rendering to science, but from witnessing its strong and wholesome influence upon all who engage in it.”²⁶ Unlike earlier reform movements, child study was not attempting to reform the child; rather, it was seeking to reform those who worked with children. Child study was in many respects an educational program for teachers, and this program delivered an ideology that placed the teacher below the child, specific knowledge below interest, and the whole underneath the individual.

This attitude was developed in the normal school curriculum by conducting observations of children. The Worcester Normal School, in Massachusetts, required that students spend hours carefully observing children, an exercise that was common to many teacher training programs. To quote from Worcester’s catalog:

The principal requests the students to observe the conduct of children in all circumstances—at home, at school, in the street, at work, at play, in conversation with one another and with adults—and record what they see and hear as soon as circumstances will permit.²⁷

Students at the State Normal School in Pennsylvania kept their observations organized in “child journals,” booklets students recorded information on children ranging from physical measurements, habits, and diet, to any number of miscellaneous observations that may have been of interest. This practice was not very methodic, and students, it seems, more or less simply jotted down what children said and did. They were instructed to not carry specific questions into these sessions; in fact, such baggage could interfere with observations and distract them from seeing other more interesting and significant

²⁶ E. Harlow Russell, “The Study of Children at the State Normal School, Worcester, Mass.,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 2 (No. 3, 1892), 352.

²⁷ William H. Burnham, “The Observation of Children at the Worcester Normal School,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 1 (No. 2, 1891), 219.

things: “To try to find what, induces a better habit of observation, we find, than to try to see whether.”²⁸ The lack of hypothesis and guiding questions led some critics to suggest that this was a flimsy science with limited practical value. As John Dewey wrote,

Its [the child study movement’s] final value for the great mass of teachers will be measured by the extent to which it enables a teacher to see more accurately and adequately into the different individual pupils that present themselves. More general theories about children are no substitutes for insight into children.²⁹

Another critic suggested that the method of collecting random observations by a single person had little value and that there “seems to be no agreement as to what is really worth studying.”³⁰

But normal school students were not autonomous and enterprising child studiers who published their findings and drew generalizations about child-life; rather, they were employing a method—be it scientific or not—in order to foster a more harmonious and sympathetic relationship with the child while, at the same time, providing researchers with raw data. The principal of the normal school in Worcester gave the rationale for the exercise:

It is the gathering of these [facts], in greater numbers, that constitutes the simple task of our students. They are to report everything they can get hold of that goes to make up the manifold activities of children’s lives; and they are to reject nothing because it seems remote or trivial, for they can never tell at the moment what significance may lurk unperceived in the most ordinary or the most extraordinary word or act or gesture.³¹

²⁸ Russell, “The Study of Children at the State Normal School,” 346.

²⁹ John Dewey, “Criticisms Wise and Otherwise on Modern Child Study,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1898), 868.

³⁰ Ossian H. Lang, “Some Cautions to be Observed in Child Study,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1898), 899.

³¹ Russell, “The Study of Children at the State Normal School,” 346.

The data were to be collected in a disinterested manner, or with “disinterested interest.”³²

This task required an open mind and a willingness to record even events that seemed insignificant and unimportant; it also meant that the observer had to efface herself to some degree: “she must forget that she is a teacher, must enter unreservedly and joyfully into the child’s world, adopt his language, accept his ways, and learn to live intimately with him, and share on equal terms his aims and interests.”³³ The teacher-observer, then, entered the child’s world secretly and in disguise. She was “to make a friend of him” and was “very careful not to let the child know that any especial study is being made of him.”³⁴ The type of surveillance described in these writings is secretive, participatory, and total:

[The observer] may frequent the haunts of the street urchin, and note how one lad succeeds in conveying an idea to another; note the way in which a motive impels an action; the effort spent to achieve a purpose...in brief, he may discover the way which a live, natural boy perceives, reproduces, apperceives, cognizes, recognizes, interprets, creates.³⁵

Total surveillance—studying children in all of their various “haunts”—was necessary because it was believed that schoolroom observations provided an incomplete picture of the child’s nature. A primary goal of the child study movement, it should be remembered, was to harmonize the school with the child’s nature; this goal was predicated on the idea that the school, as it stood, ran counter to that nature: “Nature inclines the normal child to free and almost incessant activity; the modern school requires him to sit still.”³⁶ Thus, to obtain an accurate picture of a child’s true nature, the child studier had to venture outside the confines of the school. Only by gaining an understanding of the child could the school

³² Ibid., 354.

³³ Ibid., 353.

³⁴ Buckbee, “Methods of Teaching Child Study in Normal Schools,” 790.

³⁵ Smith, “Child Study in Connection With the Professional Training of Teachers,” 449.

³⁶ G. Stanley Hall, “Editorial,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 2 (No. 1, 1892), 3.

adapt itself to the needs of that child; this method alone ensured that the school's regimen would become "plastic to the needs of the growth of childhood."³⁷

Observation and fact collecting, however, were the means to an end; these practices alone did not sufficiently unveil the child's true nature and interests. The teacher had to recognize the child, to be sure, but she was also asked to "experience" him: "the teacher...must live, to some extent, the life of some thirty to forty children everyday she is in the classroom."³⁸ Teachers, over time and through an education that had literally beat their childhood nature out of them, had forgotten what it was like to be children—if they had ever been allowed to be children in the first place. Child study, then, was also a process of personal rediscovery requiring the teacher to open her heart and quiet her head. Teachers should not overly concern themselves with the child's intellect, wrote Hall, for it is "not the intellect, but the heart of the adult and child [that] are most alike; therefore appeal to the heart, which is the strength and source of life."³⁹ Consequently, child study "awakens a true love for children" and brought teachers and students "in bonds of sympathy so close as to make the work of the schoolroom full of joy and pleasure."⁴⁰ Empathy with children would provide teachers with a compassionate understanding that could only redirect educational reform in positive ways.

Teachers in training were taught a method of inquiry that would reform the way they taught and interacted with children. The methodology advocated an emotional approach, but it did possess some "scientific" characteristics: it was secretive (the observer learned to "efface himself and conceal his purpose, to keep note-book and pencil

³⁷ Ibid., 6-7.

³⁸ Edmund, "Child Study in Normal and Training Schools," 1036.

³⁹ G. Stanley Hall, "Child Study," *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1894), 178-9.

⁴⁰ M.V. O'Shea, "President's Address, Department of Child Study" *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1898), 896.

out of sight and feign preoccupation, watching the child, as it were, out of the side of the eye”), objective (freed from “sentiment of any kind”), and total (“study the children at home, at school, everywhere”).⁴¹ Though the methodology did possess some trappings of scientific investigation requiring specialized training, it was, for the most part, an unintellectual endeavor where personality and emotions counted more than scientific scrutiny. By adopting the ideology of the child study movement, normal schools prepared teachers for a particular strand of pedagogical thought in which catering to the child’s interests, and molding the schoolhouse and its curriculum to their natures, took precedence over the traditional, content-based academic pedagogy which had, theretofore, comprised educational practice.

Below teachers, both practicing and aspiring, stood parents, the final group targeted by the child study movement. Parents and teachers, for the most part, shared the same nonscientific methodology and the study of children by parents would reform and remake the adult-child home relationship in much the same way that it would change relationships at school—again, the watchwords were sympathy and love, and the goal was to bring home-life into accord with children’s natures and interests. The benefits of adapting the schoolhouse to the child’s nature, it was thought, would be undermined if the home continued to raise children in ways that ran counter to nature’s decree, and the movement insisted that the private sphere harmonize its aims with those of the school: “Teachers must know the individual’s home life and utilize his home-past in establishing an easy transition to the school-present.”⁴² This reform ideology, then, knew no

⁴¹ Russell, “A Scheme of Classification for Child-Study,” 345; Smith, “Child Study in Connection With the Professional Training of Teachers,” 451; Bailey, “Some Difficulties of Child Study,” 583.

⁴² C.C. Vanliew, “Child Study with the Co-operation of Parents,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1897), 294.

boundaries, and it sought influence well beyond the schoolroom: “with a thorough knowledge of the recent works on child training, it would seem that no child should grow up unsystematically, with so much wisdom waiting to be applied.” In fact, all the promise and progress of child study would come to naught unless all that was learned “enter[ed] into the life of the home.”⁴³

Child study would make its way into the home via teachers, forging a new relationship between educators and parents. As mentioned, the two groups had much in common, and their missions could be easily harmonized: both were concerned with practical ends, and the means by which those ends would be achieved required that both parties be in tune with the needs and interests of children. Teachers, in this context, became the experts, and parents the students. After all, teachers did possess specialized training, institutional support, and the earned credentials that parents lacked; parents, on the other hand, generally derived their expertise from experiences that were unsystematic and theoretically groundless. Parental deference to the “experts,” then, secured teachers’ power in a movement where they generally lacked it, elevated the scientific respectability of classroom-based child study, and helped to justify and legitimize the entire venture.

As should be clear by this point, the attitude of the professoriate toward the strand of child study practiced in the schools was somewhat superior and condescending. Said one university professor, “perhaps [child study as conducted by teachers] is not worthy of the name ‘child study.’ It can lay no claim to scientific and analytic value.”⁴⁴ Such rhetoric, while securing the power of university child studiers, certainly threatened the legitimacy of the teacher’s work in the movement. But teachers themselves were able to

⁴³ Mary Coddington Bourland, “Parents as Child Students,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1897), 861.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

retain some shred of scientific legitimacy by taking inexperienced and uneducated parents under their wings. In doing so, teachers were able to appropriate the criticisms directed at them and shift them onto a new and unsuspecting audience: “Possibly such work as parents can do may not properly be called child study,” wrote one teacher, sounding very much like the professor quoted above.⁴⁵

The child study hierarchy was cooperative but not democratic. Its participants were insulated from one another, and this secured for each a relatively autonomous position within the movement—all groups were able to acquire all of the hallmarks of professional expertise as outlined by Burton Bledstein: an esoteric body of knowledge, a period of theoretical training, and earned credentials.⁴⁶ The qualifications were often defined by what the lower group lacked, and each group (with the exception of parents, who really had no professional interest at stake) stood superior to the next in terms of exactly how esoteric the knowledge was, how long the period of training had taken, and how prestigious the credentials were. The result of this organizational pattern was twofold: first, it divided one group from the others—normal school faculty, for instance, had a mission very different from the one assigned to university professors. A second consequence was that each group became an indispensable component of a large and powerful movement—the division of child study’s labor ensured that each group had a specific role to play; the entire scheme would founder without cooperation. The child study movement succeeded brilliantly in this regard—it introduced into the pedagogical conversation an impending crisis and developed an institutional response that spanned

⁴⁵ Bourland, “Parents as Child Students,” 864.

⁴⁶ Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: Norton, 1976).

from the university to the living room. Thus, child study affected all educators at all times, and, for a time, it was a very “potent force in American education.”⁴⁷

II. The Syllabus Method

The university-based child studiers were remarkably successful in their campaign to promote their discipline. Interest in child study exploded in the 1890s, leading one member of the movement to claim that “there is a wholesome interest in Child Study from the pine trees of Maine to the peaceful waters of the Pacific.”⁴⁸ G. Stanley Hall wrote, “It would take long to enumerate the academic chairs, the journals, and the important books all new in the field, where so little was lately definitely known.”⁴⁹ A major reason for child study’s successful spread was that it was made accessible to many different participants, with a diverse number of groups finding within the movement something that interested them specifically. As one historian of the movement has written,

Child study bridged the gap between pseudoscientific philosophical speculations and a true science of the child, between “rational” education and educational psychology, between sentimental, romantic, permissive child-rearing attitudes and modern child-rearing based on scientific principles.⁵⁰

The blending of scientific respectability with a romantic idea of childhood made child study appealing to different groups, and for different reasons, explaining why it “caught the imagination and enthusiasm of parents and teachers as well as of educators,

⁴⁷ Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 36.

⁴⁸ Edmund, “Child Study in Normal and Training Schools,” 1033.

⁴⁹ G. Stanley Hall, “Unresolved Problems of Child Study and the Method of Their Attack,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1904), 783.

⁵⁰ Ernest Belden, “A History of the Child Study Movement in the United States, 1870-1920,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California-Berkeley, 1965), 233-234.

philosophers, and psychologists.” Indeed, few “could have foreseen the tremendous stimulation and growth of interest in the study of children that was to typify the movement.”⁵¹ Ironically, popularity ultimately proved to be a crippling weakness; as one historian has noted, widespread appeal eventually discredited the movement itself: “Child study became disreputable and lost popularity since perceived as a movement of amateurs.”⁵² And it was, in fact, a movement comprised largely of amateurs. Though a small band of eminent university men led from the top, they relied heavily on the involvement of nonspecialists who collected data and, for the most part, actually conducted a bulk of the studies produced throughout the 1890s and into the twentieth century.

Most of the studies published in the *Pedagogical Seminary* relied on massive sets of data collected by schoolteachers from across the country. From Clark University, Hall and his colleagues issued topical questionnaires, or syllabi, that focused on particular subjects they wished to study, such as children’s fears and friendships, the contents of their imagination, or their relationships with toys and pets. Armed with these sets of predetermined questions, teachers presented them to their students, and they did so under strict instructions: they were not to offer assistance or color their student’s answers in any way. There was no right or wrong involved; what was sought was an unadulterated glimpse into the child’s mind, “a sound and intimate knowledge of the child’s character, in all its manifoldness and unity.”⁵³ The role of teachers, then, was merely mechanical, and child studiers hoped that the minimization of the teacher’s influence would provide

⁵¹ Dorothy E. Bradbury, “The Contribution of the Child Study Movement to Child Psychology,” *Psychological Bulletin* 34 (January 1937), 21.

⁵² Belden, “A History of Child Study,” 229.

⁵³ Bailey, “Some Difficulties of Child-Study,” 583.

data that was “uncolored and unclouded by a present personality.”⁵⁴ Despite this limited role, however, it did provide teachers with an important place within the movement. As Dorothy Ross has written, the topical syllabi supplied “the glue which held a great majority of the teacher participants to child study.”⁵⁵ Teacher involvement achieved two goals set by the movement’s leaders: first, their participation proved indispensable in collecting large sets of data; and, second, their membership ensured that teachers would become familiar with the basic tenets of child study itself. Many of the ideas explored in previous chapters, such as the theory of recapitulation, were fundamental components of the movement’s philosophy, and involving teachers was a way to broadcast those ideas beyond academia and into the nation’s classrooms.

The completed questionnaires were returned to Clark, where the data were analyzed, conclusions drawn, and results published. Child studiers had great faith in the questionnaire method and considered it to have many advantages. Most important, syllabi provided researchers with high volumes of untarnished, “objective” data. Large studies were thought to be superior to investigations that focused on a small number of children and relied on the competence of a single observer—data derived from such studies, however valuable, were insufficient in meeting the movement’s ambitious goal of understanding childhood as a whole. As one scholar noted, “where returns from hundreds or thousands are involved, individual errors obliterate each other. For these reasons, the results are likely to be more generally applicable than those of a more careful study of a

⁵⁴ Will Grant Chambers, “Questionnaire Methods of Child Study,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1904), 768.

⁵⁵ Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist As Prophet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 292.

more limited area.”⁵⁶ Another advantage of the syllabi method was that it allowed researchers to study all ages at one time, making it unnecessary to follow a cohort over its entire educational career. Most important, however, was that the open-ended nature of the syllabus freed children from the expectations and pressures that may have been exerted by a more forceful or invasive investigative technique: syllabic investigation allowed for creativity and spontaneity. Children, who generally knew “nothing of the purpose of the theme” on which they were being questioned, were encouraged to jot down whatever popped into their heads, providing researchers with many surprising bits of information that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.⁵⁷ Child studiers hoped that the method would lead to significant reforms: “If we could get at the child’s inner life, could look upon the world through his eyes, it seems plain that we should know him in part, live with him more intelligently, treat him more fairly.”⁵⁸

The movement was extremely vigorous in its campaign to distribute syllabi throughout the American school system. Between 1894 and 1896, a particularly active moment in the movement’s history, Clark University sent out thirty-one syllabi on a diverse number of topics to numerous individuals, mother’s organizations, teachers and normal schools, women’s clubs, and collegiate alumnae groups. By mid-1896 more than 60,000 returns had poured back into the offices at Clark.⁵⁹ The syllabi method generated reams of data, an amount that would have been otherwise impossible without the assistance of so many helpers on the ground. And though the project did involve collaboration between teachers and university researchers, the roles were clearly divided

⁵⁶ Chambers, “Questionnaire Methods of Child Study,” 768.

⁵⁷ F.G. Bonser, “Chums: A Study in Youthful Friendships,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 9 (June 1902), 221.

⁵⁸ Margaret E. Schallenberger, “A Study of Children’s Rights, As Seen By Themselves,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 3 (October 1894), 87

⁵⁹ G. Stanley Hall, “Editorial,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 3 (June 1896), 357.

and always maintained—teachers did not write the questionnaires, tabulate the students' answers, or formulate conclusions from the data; after all, that was “the work of scientific investigation, and should be left to those who are interested in discovering some new general truth.”⁶⁰

The syllabi focused on any number of themes, all of which sought to answer two primary questions. The first concerned the interests of children, which child studiers considered to be “sacred.”⁶¹ “Interest,” wrote one member of the field, “is one of the most significant words in our educational vocabulary,” and one of the most important goals of the movement was to retool the school’s curricula in ways that served the child’s interest—an uninteresting curriculum was thought to have no impact on the child.⁶² Topical questionnaires could elucidate children’s interests and Hall recommended that teachers and parents pay close attention to times when those interests were manifest. Indeed, in one syllabus issued by Hall, he requested that parents and teachers simply record moments of curiosity and interest, as determined by the kinds of questions children asked: “Perhaps nothing gives a clearer view of the activity of the child’s mind, and its varied interests, than a list of miscellaneous questions selected on no other basis than that they show thought and observation.”⁶³ Once collected and analyzed, the information gained from the studies would inform classroom practice by determining what interests were predominant during the different stages of childhood, suggesting to practitioners what content should be reflected in the school’s curriculum. On the practical

⁶⁰ Thompson, “Child Study in the Training of Teachers,” 918.

⁶¹ William H. Burnham, “Child Study as the Basis of Pedagogy,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1893), 719.

⁶² Fletcher B. Dresslar, “The Contributions of Twenty-Five Years of Organized Child Study to American Educational Theory and Practice,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1907), 912.

⁶³ G. Stanley Hall and Theodate L. Smith, “Curiosity and Interest,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 10 (September 1903), 346.

application of interest-based studies, Hall wrote, “it will be the best and surest norm for ascertaining when all such matter can be taught with greatest economy and with most effectiveness, and will also shed great light upon methods of instruction.”⁶⁴

More ambitious was the second aim of child study: to derive from topical syllabi a genetic picture of the evolutionary development of childhood and the race. For Hall and others, the manifestation of interest always spoke to a deeper truth, and the tabulation of those interests contributed to the formation of a genetic history of mankind by highlighting atavistic tendencies inherited from the race. “The child is first of all a bunch of keys,” Hall wrote, “capable of unlocking most of the secrets of the entire history of life.”⁶⁵ As syllabi captured children’s responses to certain questions, they revealed countless “phylogenetic analogies”—or instances when a child’s behavior reflected the behavior of past civilizations.⁶⁶ As interested as Hall was in reforming educational practice, he was more interested in developing a psychological system that analyzed individual behavior from a historical, or genetic, point of view—without genetic psychology, he thought, proper educational reform would be an impossible dream.⁶⁷ For Hall, the study of children was equally a study of human history. It was this theory, the “general psychonomic law,” that gave rise to Hall’s recapitulatory conclusions.

The idea that children’s actions and thoughts were manifestations of atavistic impulses was one Hall took from Edward B. Tylor, the anthropologist who most

⁶⁴ Ibid., 356.

⁶⁵ G. Stanley Hall, “Recent Advances in Child Study,” *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, NEA* (1908), 950.

⁶⁶ G. Stanley Hall and C.E. Browne, “Children’s Ideas of Fire, Heat, Frost and Cold,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 10 (March 1903), 55.

⁶⁷ On this point Dorothy Ross and I disagree. Ross is of the opinion that Hall was more committed to developing practical reform than he was in establishing a true genetic picture of human history. But the former was clearly dependent on the latter, which was the more important theme in *Adolescence*. See Ross, *G. Stanley Hall*, 298.

influenced Hall's work. Tylor's theory of the progressive development of human civilization was based largely on his theory of survivals, which held that evolving cultures or societies retained characteristics of their evolutionary predecessors. It was a theory that smacked of recapitulation and thus found a welcome place in Hall's work—in Tylor's words, survivals

are processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved.⁶⁸

For Tylor, the customs or traditions of any group, no matter how absurd, irrational, or pointless they may have seemed, could be explained by locating their historical precedents—the theory of survivals was, in fact, an overarching theory of psychological causation that explained human behavior historically. And, in Tylor's words, it “remov[es] from our view of human thought and action the ideas of chance and arbitrary invention, and in substituting for them a theory of development by the co-operation of individual men.”⁶⁹

Accordingly, “illogical” behaviors were believed to be remnants of archaic practices that had once served important social purposes. Superstitions, the practice of occult science, the belief in magic, the lure of games of chance, nonsensical sayings, proverbs and riddles, and a whole host of customary rites were all thought to be survivals. For Tylor, their study demonstrated “how direct and close the connexion may be between modern culture and the condition of the rudest savage.”⁷⁰ As seen in previous chapters, the retention of atavistic tendencies or behaviors was often found among “abnormal”

⁶⁸ Edward B. Tylor, *The Origins of Culture: Primitive Culture, Volume One* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958 [1871]), 16.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

groups such as lunatics or criminals. Tylor agreed with the premise, and took great interest in studying contemporary peoples who were not fully in step with the rest of society. The spiritualist movements that were sweeping Europe and America at the time, which could count among its disciples “tens of thousands,” were in reality “a direct revival from the regions of savage philosophy and peasant folk-lore.”⁷¹ Tylor thought that the rise of witchcraft in medieval Europe and during the American colonial period was also evidence of an ancient survival: witchcraft “had been chronic among the lower races for how many ages we cannot tell. Witchcraft is part and parcel of savage life.”⁷² And, finally, the sometimes-baffling behaviors of children could be explained by atavistic inheritances and savage reversions:

Children’s sports, popular sayings, absurd customs, may be practically unimportant, but are not philosophically insignificant, bearing as they do on some of the most instructive phases of early culture. Ugly and cruel superstitions may prove to be relics of primitive barbarism.⁷³

Thus, the behavior of children could always be “examined with an eye to ethnological lessons to be gained from them.”⁷⁴ An analysis of games commonly played by children, for instance, was instructive: “As games thus keep up the record of primitive warlike arts, so they reproduce, in what are at once sports and little children’s lessons, early stages in the history of child-like tribes of mankind.”⁷⁵ Tylor’s theory of survivals influenced other anthropologists as well, and the idea commonly appeared in field’s literature. Discussing its influence on the field of folklore, for instance, J.W. Powell wrote,

Remember it [folklore] is the science of superstitions, and the science must deal with the fundamental errors of mankind (as the phenomena of nature have been

⁷¹ Ibid., 142.

⁷² Ibid., 138.

⁷³ Ibid., 111.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 72.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 73-74.

interpreted by savage and barbaric peoples), and how these errors as vestigial phenomena have remained over in civilization and are still entertained.⁷⁶

The theory of survivals proved extremely influential in Hall's studies of children, both in the *Seminary* and in *Adolescence*.

The syllabi studies published in the *Pedagogical Seminary* always sought to answer the phylogenetic question prompted by Tylor and other recapitulatory thinkers, and the behavior of children was analyzed historically through the lenses of evolution and recapitulation. The *Seminary* studies, then, always addressed two issues: first, what children were most interested in at different stages of their development, with the aim of modifying school curricula to ensure that those interests were taught to; and, second, how those interests elucidated the developmental history of humankind. Unfortunately, the studies' results were rarely organized by the evolutionary framework that Hall held so dear—the data gathered from children of all different ages were mixed into one bag of conclusions, and, consequently, adolescence was not frequently separated from other stages of childhood. Instead, children were lumped into a monolithic category, all resembling savage and primitive types, but not precisely correlated with specific races or groups. It was a major flaw in the method, though one Hall tried to correct in *Adolescence*. As Dorothy Ross had written,

Often [Hall] suggested that a child's impulse was a hereditary survival from a much earlier age and that it had features in common with certain characteristics of primitive cultures, but he was never able to show that the timetable of evolution indicated to what age of childhood the impulse belonged.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ J.W. Powell, "The Lessons of Folklore," *American Anthropologist* 2 (January 1900), 3.

⁷⁷ Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall*, 306.

The *Seminary* studies were quite formulaic, and all followed the same rubric—an examination of several reveals the common pattern that they followed, and provides a deeper understanding of the ideas that fueled the movement as a whole.

In 1904 Hall co-authored a study titled “How Children Think and Feel About Clouds,” an attempt to measure children’s interests in clouds while, at the same time, determining the role that cloud-based lore or superstition had played throughout the course of human history. The study, like all others, began with a set of questions asked to children: What are bright clouds on a sunny day made of, and what are they for? What have you fancied you saw in the clouds? How did the prettiest and brightest ones you ever saw make you feel? The questionnaire generated 461 returns, composed of material that was “heterogeneous and from different places; gathered on different methods, from different ages.”⁷⁸ Hall and his colleague sorted the data thematically. For instance, the study yielded a number of responses concerning cloud representations, 373 animate, 226 inanimate, which, in turn, were organized into more specific categories. Hall was astounded by the richness of the data:

One is again struck by the variousness of the appeal made by the clouds, or the responses to them. They can arouse impulses that run the entire gamut of feeling; that touch every chord of sentiment, from the smooth and gentle to the loud and terrible. The strongest feelings appear to be those of fear, longing, joy or delight, reverence and awe. The appeal is both aesthetic and ethical.⁷⁹

Children’s responses were compared to cloud references found in works of anthropology and mythology in an attempt to trace their ideas about clouds to primitive survivals. The *Seminary* studies almost always cited anthropological and mythical

⁷⁸ G. Stanley Hall and J.E.W. Wallin, “How Children and Youth Think and Feel About Clouds,” *The Pedagogical Seminary* 9 (December 1902), 460.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 474.

literature, the primary source material from which evidence of survivals was drawn. Hall assumed that similarities between the feelings that children harbored toward clouds and references made about clouds in a particular culture's myths provided important historical insight—similarities were never regarded as coincidence, but as pieces of evidence that supported the theory of recapitulation. Referencing the work of anthropologists demonstrated what ideas and behaviors were learned and which were truly atavistic; any response that found precedent in the anthropological record was thought to indicate a proven instance of atavism. Sounding very much like Tylor himself, Hall wrote,

Thus a very large proportion [of children's ideas] may be traced to suggestions derived from external nature, to tales or stories read or heard and to the nursery yarns of old grannies. How many are due to reversions, or ancestral adumbrations, as automatically operative without any external prompting?⁸⁰

When correlations between children's responses and the beliefs of primitive peoples were found, Hall assumed that he had found a "phylogenetic analogy": an instance of universal racial interest that existed within the core of human experience. The fear of dark clouds, for instance, was present in both children and in the lore of primitive peoples, suggesting that

The idea of the dark or thunder clouds as bringing harm is common in the individual history of the child and the history of the race. In the former, the basis of experience is far too slight to account for the intensity of the emotions aroused, and for its explanation we must turn from the history of the individual to the history of the race.⁸¹

The value of the cloud study, Hall concluded, was that it revealed a universal interest, shared by all children and all peoples throughout the course of history—the

⁸⁰ Ibid., 480.

⁸¹ Ibid., 502.

child's interest in clouds was an atavistic inheritance—and though the subject may have seemed to some trivial, if not mundane, Hall regarded it as another piece of evidence in his phylogenetic puzzle. Furthermore, he suggested that universal interests, once discovered, should be embraced by the school's curriculum; the cloud study, like all of Hall's syllabi studies, concluded with a piece of practical advice directed to school officials:

A half-hour twice, or even once a week, systematically devoted as a regular part of the school exercises, to watching the colors, motion changes and positions of clouds, would have a practical value in relieving the overstrain of the eyes from close application. The subsequent writing down of all impressions would furnish an exercise in language study and the mental life of the child would be enriched and broadened.⁸²

No less interesting was Hall's "A Study of Dolls," published in 1896. The doll syllabus was composed of eleven questions and was submitted to eight hundred teachers; results were also gathered from letters written by reminiscing adults, observations of mothers, and compositions written by high school- and normal school students. (It was common practice to generate conclusions from mixed sets of data.) Hall was particularly interested in anthropomorphic themes—many primitives attributed human characteristics to objects and phenomena in the natural world—and he focused much of the study on the ways in which children treated their dolls as they would real people: the psychic qualities attributed to them, the way they were cared for, or how they were named, for instance. Unsurprisingly, Hall found that the child's relationship with dolls had an atavistic precedent: doll interest was a recapitulation of idol worship from "the low pagan stage," a

⁸² Ibid., 506.

conclusion supported by comparing children's doll play with the religious rites of the Japanese, Javanese, the Mokis, Pueblo, and Kiowas tribes, and the ancient Egyptians.⁸³

Like Hall's study of children's interest in clouds, the doll study seemed to open up innumerable opportunities for child studiers interested in understanding the needs and interests of children. In doll play, wrote Hall, much was revealed: "we see things which the childish instinct often tends to keep secret, fully revealed"; "The doll is taught those things learned best or in which the child has the most interest"; "the individuality of children is more clearly revealed in the characters they give their dolls than in their traits."⁸⁴ Close examination of the treatment of dolls revealed how children understood complex concepts: ideas about justice were divulged when dolls were "punished"; a child's knowledge of death and the afterlife were made evident when a doll "died"; and a young girl's understanding of the duties of motherhood was made clear by the way she cared for her own dolls. Indeed, the importance of the subject could not be overestimated:

a doll microcosm opens up a world of relationships so large, and simplifies things so complex as to be otherwise closed to the infant mind. If we take a large view of the doll problem it thus comprises most of the important questions of education.⁸⁵

A theme of such importance could not be ignored by the school curriculum and, as was his custom, Hall concluded the study by issuing a piece of advice to educators.

The educational value of dolls is enormous, and the protest of this paper is against longer neglect of it. It educates the heart and will, even more than the intellect, and to learn how to control and apply it, will be to discover a new instrument in education of the very highest potency. Every parent and every teacher...should study the doll habits of each child.⁸⁶

⁸³ G. Stanley Hall and A. Caswell Ellis, "A Study of Dolls," *Pedagogical Seminary* 4 (October 1896), 160.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 162-163.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 163-164.

The *Seminary* studies discovered that nearly all relationships that children had with objects in the world involved some degree of anthropomorphication. Hall's "A Study of Children's Interests in Flowers," for instance, found that children frequently transferred human characteristics on to flowers—433 returns showed that children regarded flowers as sentient beings: a third thought that flowers spoke, while many thought flowers were capable of suffering, feeling pain and sadness when picked and taken away from their "friends." The "language of flowers" was also an anthropomorphic atavism: "Forget-me-not," "Cuddle-me-to-you," and "Jump-up-and-kiss-me" were survivals from a primitive period when cultures had assigned human characteristics to flowers. The practice was common among ancient or primitive peoples. The Malays cared for rice as if it were a person, and the Fijians believed that plants had souls—Hall's research revealed numerous instances of plant worship in "the history of primitive belief" where plants were thought to have had special and magical powers.⁸⁷

The tendency shared by children and primitives to endow inanimate objects with human or magical powers was easily accounted for by evolutionary thinkers such as Tylor and Hall. The belief in magic, wrote Tylor, "belongs in its main principle to the lowest known stages of civilization, and the lower races, who have not partaken largely of the education of the world."⁸⁸ Susceptibility to magical explanations resulted from an inability to understand the principle of causation—a theme explored in the previous chapter—and the mistaking of "an ideal for a real connexion." Tylor considered magic to be "one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind," one that children

⁸⁷ G. Stanley Hall, "A Study of Children's Interest in Flowers," *Pedagogical Seminary* 12 (June 1905): 107-140.

⁸⁸ Tylor, *The Origins of Culture*, 112.

needed to grow out of, lest it develop into a pathological disorder, such as lunacy.⁸⁹ It was also considered common among “lower” races, such as those of African decent who was sometimes considered insane: “Even in their most enlightened circles, [Negroes] have never gotten rid of that lowest order of superstition common to the race since the birth of their most ancient forefathers, which is a firm belief in and practice of what has been called voodooism.”⁹⁰ If children retained such beliefs into adulthood they might suffer from arrested development, and Tylor thought it essential that survivals be eradicated:

The nobler tendency of advancing culture, and above all of scientific culture, is to honour the dead without groveling before them, to profit by the past without sacrificing the present to it. Yet even the modern civilized world has but half learnt this lesson, and an unprejudiced survey may lead us to judge how many of our ideas and customs exist rather by being old than by being good.⁹¹

Hall’s attitude toward survivals was more tempered—rather than suppress them, he thought that educators should embrace them. A curriculum informed by child study did not seek to stamp out the similarities that children shared with savages but, instead, used those commonalities as a guide. Hall thought that knowledge had to be presented to children in the order of its historical development; in the school, the curriculum should follow the course of the development of ideas as they had evolved from low, primitive cultures to highly civilized societies—all subjects were to be taught as courses in the history of ideas. It made sense, especially in light of the fact that children and savages shared the same capacities to comprehend the world, just as they possessed the same impulses and desires—primitive world views *made sense* to children, while modern explanations based on science and logic did not. Thus, it would make little sense to

⁸⁹ Ibid., 116; 112.

⁹⁰ No author. “Concerning Negro Sorcery in the United States,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 3 (October 1890), 282.

⁹¹ Tylor, *The Origins of Culture*, 157.

present the scientific aspects of natural phenomena without first teaching children primitives' mythical or religious explanations for how the cosmos worked—neither savage nor child could be expected to understand the principles of planetary rotation, knowledge that had been developed late in the history of the race. Just as the individual recapitulated the history of the whole, the curriculum would have to recapitulate the whole history of knowledge, presenting all information in the order of evolutionary development. In discussing how science should be taught, Hall wrote that curricula designed for adolescents should

normally approach any and every branch of science over the same road which the race traversed in a prescientific age. There should be a humanistic propaedeutic because youth is in the humanist stage. Nature is sentiment before it becomes idea or formula or utility. The chief among many reasons why all branches of science are so disappointing to their promoters in high school and college is, that in the exact logical, technical way they are taught, they violate the basal law of psychic growth, ignore the deep springs of natural interest, and attempt to force a precocity against which the instincts of the young, so much wiser and truer and older than their consciousness, happily revolt.⁹²

Hall wanted all of the school's subjects to be approached historically—an individual's acquisition of knowledge had to recapitulate the same processes experienced by the race as a whole, and the curriculum was to be informed by anthropological study: "Science itself arose by working over and over to ever more refined forms old nature myths, and to some extent, in a true pedagogy, youth must repeat the process."⁹³ The pedagogical creed found in *Adolescence* was based on this logic, and throughout the book Hall incorporated the results from syllabi studies originally published in the *Seminary*

⁹² G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology And Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, Vol. 2* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969 [1904]), 150.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 152.

while outlining a developmentally based curricula for all manner of subjects. Curricular proposals were always based on the logic of recapitulation:

The practical and scientific outcome here again is that, if it is well that the child should reproduce ancient industries, by the same token he should, if his development is to be complete, here also revive the ancient sentiments and view-points of the race, more or less as the tadpole must develop a tail only to be absorbed by the growing legs, the development of which it was necessary both to stimulate and to feed.⁹⁴

Signs of survivals and recapitulatory reversions were everywhere, providing educators with important lessons concerning the scientific development of curriculum. In Hall's "The Cat and the Child," published in 1904, he wrote,

The cat, anthropomorphized along much the same lines which we have followed in the child, has made and left an indelible impression on the consciousness of the race is well attested by its prevalence in myth and legend, as well as a large body of proverbs, witticisms, popular sayings, etc., many of which are still current. With the child these anthropomorphifications are passing impressions of a short period; in the race their influence is long dominant. With the child they are plastic and varying to the fancy; in the race, stiffened into myth, legend, and proverb, they are factors in the serious business of life.⁹⁵

Basing his educational philosophy on recapitulatory theory, Hall incorporated the suggestions found in the cat study to the study of zoology in general: "This stratum is one of the very richest layers in paleopsychic development, and its outcrops in the many varied zoolatries of savage life, which show its strength, constitute one of the most interesting illustrations of the way in which the stages of a child's development repeat those through which the race has passed."⁹⁶ And, "man's development would have been very different without animals, and the fishing, hunting, and pastoral stages, so childhood

⁹⁴ Ibid., 174.

⁹⁵ G. Stanley Hall and C.E. Browne, "The Child and the Cat," *Pedagogical Seminary* 11 (March 1904), 17.

⁹⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 222.

is maimed if long robbed of its due measure of influences from this comprehensive arsenal of educational material.”⁹⁷

When teachers collected data for Hall’s syllabi studies they were participating in the creation of a new educational philosophy based on the principles of recapitulation. It was important work, even though the studies themselves may have been scientifically untenable. As Dorothy Ross has written, “The best of the work produced was useful or suggestive, but the bulk of it was scientifically shoddy and practically worthless.”⁹⁸ And Herbert Kliebard concluded that Hall’s ideas were derived not from scientifically sound research, but from “metaphysical, even mystical, assumptions about the alleged relationship between the stages in individual development and the history of the human race.”⁹⁹ Both historians are correct—Hall’s studies were frequently composed of scientific nonsense and unsubstantiated claims. But even nonsense can be influential. The aim of this chapter has not been to disprove the scientific validity of Hall’s work—the mere presentation of his ideas should cause considerable skepticism. Instead, the purpose has been to demonstrate that his ideas, while problematic, were influential—they fit the ideological climate of the day and found an institutional context that developed and spread them. Child study was a powerful movement and Hall did revolutionize understandings of childhood by allying children with savage and primitive groups. Furthermore, he designed and commanded an institutional apparatus that broadcast those ideas across the entire educational spectrum. The ideas championed in *Adolescence* did not fall of deaf ears; any person who participated in the child study movement would have been familiar with them.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 227.

⁹⁸ Ross, *G. Stanley Hall*, 298.

⁹⁹ Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 38.

Stephen Jay Gould has reminded us that G. Stanley Hall was “not a crackpot, but America’s premier psychologist.”¹⁰⁰ And though modern scholars have debunked recapitulatory science, few have demonstrated its historical significance. Even fewer have asked what survivals of recapitulation live with us today. Might Tylor’s theory be useful in investigating modern attitudes toward adolescents? And might Hall’s recapitulatory model be instructive when applied to the history of childhood itself? If Hall could find the basis for understanding civilized man through the study of primitive peoples, one wonders if scholars in the twenty-first century might find an understanding of modern attitudes toward adolescents by reexamining their roots in Hall’s work. At the very least, it is a project that Hall himself would have endorsed. After all, it was his belief that the understanding of any subject required an investigation of the myths of the past.

III. Child Study’s Colonial Rationale: Possibilities and Dangers

“The child and the race are each keys to the other,” wrote G. Stanley Hall, who found in primitive ideas and customs phyletic explanations for nearly everything.¹⁰¹ As seen in the previous sections, the child study movement fused anthropological studies with observations of children to create a developmental map that ordered behaviors and ideas in relation to their perceived evolutionary appearance. Children exhibited primitive tendencies in their moral and intellectual development, were often spurred to action by “savage” instincts and impulses, shared a physiological resemblance with the lower races, and suffered from the same faults and diseases as did many of the world’s less evolved

¹⁰⁰ Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996 [1981]), 147.

¹⁰¹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, viii.

peoples. Indeed, much of *Adolescence*'s thirteen hundred pages sought to demonstrate "the immense importance of further coordinating childhood and youth with the development of the race."¹⁰² Children and savages shared numerous similarities and, from a recapitulatory point of view, the study of one group always shed light on the other—the two were thought to inhabit identical evolutionary moments, a hypothesis proven by the elucidation of developmental commonalities and shared interests. But adolescents and primitives shared more than this. Hall thought that the modern world treated each unjustly—"most savages in most respects are children," he wrote, but that did not merit the full scale subjection of primitive groups; and though the adolescent "resembles the savage," that did not justify treating him in the same harsh, oppressive ways that savages were dealt with in the colonial realm.¹⁰³ Adolescents and savages, thought to be synonymous in so many respects, were, in Hall's opinion, both under attack. Young people were being warred upon in the schools, while primitive groups were being enslaved in the colonies, each forced to live lives that ran counter to their natures. The point is not an exaggeration. Hall devoted the final hundred pages of *Adolescence*—the book's climax—to a condemnation of colonial practices, and he considered the study of the savage's colonial experience to be illustrative of the struggles faced by adolescents back home:

No study of adolescence can be complete without some study of nearly one-third of the human race, occupying two-fifths of the land surface of the globe, now included in the one hundred and thirty-six colonies and dependencies of the world, that are in a relation of greater or less subjection to a few civilized nations.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 649; Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 44.

¹⁰⁴ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 648.

Though a committed Darwinian, Hall did not consider it just to think of the colonial project as a struggle between competing groups where the “fittest” would prevail. And while Darwin thought that the extinction of entire races to be a natural result of the competition for limited resources, Hall found it to be a terrible crime. “Man is the only known creature that has destroyed his own pedigree,” he wrote, noting with alarm that racial extermination was becoming more frequent in modern times:

Never, perhaps, were lower races being extirpated as weeds in the human garden, both by conscious and organic processes, so rapidly as to-day. In many minds this is inevitable and not without justification. Pity and sympathy, says Nietzsche, are now a disease, and we are summoned to rise above morals and clear the world’s stage for the survival of those who are fittest because strongest.¹⁰⁵

But the arguments made by Nietzsche and others made little sense to Hall—to him, it would have been equally outrageous to justify the extermination of children simply because they were weak and easily conquered. “Primitive peoples have the same right to linger in the paradise of childhood. To war upon them is to war upon children. To commercialize and oppress them with work is child labor on a large scale.”¹⁰⁶ Hall’s chronicle of the mistreatment of savage groups showed modern man’s conduct in the colonies to be savage and barbaric—the natives of Newfoundland were “shot like beasts by ruthless hunters”; convicts and adventurers had “misused” Tasmanian women and given them venereal diseases; the inhabitants of Oceania, thought one anthropologist, “have no future but in heaven”; and the indigenous Hawaiian population was declining rapidly.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 651.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 649.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 652; 653; 655.

Hall made the provocative claim that “if [savages] are bad, we are responsible and we should have them on our conscience and feel accountable for their future.”¹⁰⁸ The American Indian had originally welcomed European settlers, but after a period discovered that the visitors were “insatiably greedy of gold and slaves, malignantly cruel, and their gift of fire-water...was perhaps the most important agent in the downfall of the aborigines”— “first welcomed as gods, the whites were soon regarded as devils,” and only after numerous instances of treachery and cruelty did the Indian become “savage” toward Europeans.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Hall sometimes wondered who, exactly, was civilized and who was savage—all too often colonization brought out the worst in the Europeans, leading Hall to suggest that the “work of missionaries is often needed much more among the conquering soldiers and the prospectors, brandy traders, and adventures that follow in their wake than among the unsophisticated barbarians.”¹¹⁰ The examples of colonial violence and genocide were numerous, and Hall catalogued each case with outrage and sadness, sometimes letting his pen get the best of him:

To read the outrages, butcheries, nameless crimes and torturings which are compiled from official records makes the mouth grow dry, the eyes wet, the heart throb, the teeth and fists clinch, and the soul to cry out whether there is no justice in heaven or on earth.¹¹¹

Not all colonial projects resulted in racial extermination, of course—that would have been poor policy for an economy that depended on the labor of native populations. But the loss of indigenous culture, which often did not improve productivity, frequently attended colonization, a problem that also dismayed Hall and one that he considered to be

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 698.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 689.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 686.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 692.

unnecessary. The chronicle of cultural violence recorded in *Adolescence* was equally alarming. The indigenous populations of Mexico, Hall wrote, “have lost a well-developed civilization and literature, and that many of their languages have become primitive and others died out, and that since the Spanish conquest they have fallen into a semi-barbarous state.”¹¹² On boarding schools that attempted to remake the children of American Indians into the “image” of white men, Hall wrote: “To educate by teaching children not to honor but to abhor their parents is monstrous and unchristian.”¹¹³ And he considered efforts to completely eradicate Hindu religious practices in the quest to spread Christianity “psycho-pedagogic barbarism and brutality.”¹¹⁴

There is no question that Hall’s concerns were genuine; he was a humanitarian and was saddened by the eradication of indigenous cultures—the conquest of Mexico was a “deplorable calamity,” his readings on the exploitation of Africans in the rubber trade were “heart-rending” and “painful,” and the destruction of temples by missionaries in Hawaii was deplorable.¹¹⁵ Hall’s account of injustices meted out to primitive peoples by European colonizers offended his moral and religious sense, but another concern was equally apparent in the final pages of *Adolescence*: the disappearance of primitive culture was a historical loss for Europeans; with each indigenous group, cultural practice, or religious rite that became extinct, the further Western man got from ever truly knowing himself. “Ours is an unhistoric land,” wrote Hall, and reflecting upon the decline of indigenous culture in Mexico, he noted:

No historian or philosopher can ever estimate the loss to the world by this wreckage of an ancient and highly developed civilization, so completely

¹¹² Ibid., 682-683.

¹¹³ Ibid., 699.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 736.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 687; 669.

exterminated that we can never know very definitely what it was, containing for us perhaps priceless scientific and practical lessons which might do us as much good in dealing with this race as what they got from us did them harm. Race pedagogy has irretrievably lost we know not what arts of irrigation, taxation, high tribal organization, native agriculture, industries, new solutions of family, social, and ethical relations... The new solutions of so many of our own problems, dimly seen here, should suggest how many more things than our philosophy dreams of or our history records have been in and vanished from the world, and wring our hearts with pity not only for vanished races but for ourselves.¹¹⁶

Civilization could only be understood in relation to savagery, for it was the latter that demonstrated the historical development of the former. “The customs, institutions, and beliefs of primitive peoples are related to ours somewhat as instinct is related to reason.”¹¹⁷ European colonizers, thought Hall, were overly focused on economic concerns, too narrow in their educational aims, and unnecessarily aggressive in their efforts to supplant indigenous religions with Christianity. Their fixity of purpose and myopic cultural vision prevented them from understanding the value that primitive and savage groups had in developing among Westerners a deeper knowledge of themselves—anthropological study “corrects undue self-complacency, broadens religious prejudice, and deepens the sense of universal brotherhood.”¹¹⁸ But contact with primitive races in the colonial theater presented Westerners with opportunities they all too often ignored.

ethnological and genetic problems, which give a vastly deepened background and an enlarged horizon to history, all of which is but news of the day compared with the past ages through which heredity had been doing its silent work. All this summons us to larger views, and marks the present and near future as by far the greatest of all the historic periods and opens the most magnificent opportunities ever presented to education and to a new constructive statesmanship. Ideally the two are one and inseparable.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, xvi; Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 683.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 726.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 726-727.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 649.

Failure to learn those lessons ensured that economic conquest would give way to cultural imperialism. Hall thought that racial understanding could be developed from the recapitulatory realization that all races shared “cosmic relations,” historical connectivity, and interdependence. Ignoring this fact would result in racial insensitivity that might lead to cultural hegemony and programs of “unwilling assimilation”—“what a few overgrown races call civilization seems likely to be forced upon the entire world.”¹²⁰ Hall regretted that the trend was toward greater cultural homogeneity: “It will be a dreary and monotonous world if the dreams of the jingoes of modern culture and uniformity are realized.”¹²¹ Western colonizers suffered from an exaggerated sense of their own superiority, which led them to dismiss primitive cultures as irrelevant and worthless. Too many colonizers sought to wipe out indigenous cultures, failing to understand that it was possible to interact with primitive groups while, at the same time, respecting their customs and beliefs. “No race ideal has ever been more narrow, provincial, or banal,” wrote Hall. “It is a colossal assumption that what we call civilization is the end of man, or the best thing in the world.”¹²²

One of the primary mistakes committed by educators and missionaries in the colonies was their tendency to rush primitives into a civilization for which they were unprepared—as we have seen, Hall thought that in so doing the worst elements of savage life were brought to the surface, resulting in behaviors that were immoral, criminal or insane. Precocious development was dangerous:

It is not pessimistic to realize that our civilization is not only a doom and disease when forced precociously upon lower races, but that it has created scores of

¹²⁰ Ibid., 714.

¹²¹ Ibid., 717.

¹²² Ibid.

diseases, made cities biological furnaces where life is consumed, and in general has a dark as well as a bright side.¹²³

Neither the educational system nor the colonial world was comfortable with embracing the individual's nature, and Western pedagogues and policy makers were too aggressive in their attempts to "civilize" children and indigenous peoples. Just as primitive were often forced to take up the civilized ways of their conquerors, young people in America's schools were unnecessarily rushed from childhood to adulthood:

Instead of entering upon the full, rich life of the race which is our heritage, which is the only meaning of the grand old ideal of a humanistic and truly liberal education, and lingering as long as possible in the paradise of unfallen man, that the individual may enlarge itself as far as possible toward the dimensions of his species, there is a veritable rage for prematurity, for precociously assuming adult burdens, airs, indolencies, and callousness.¹²⁴

Educational regimens that sought to develop precocious youth rendered a great disservice—schools that failed to embrace childhood's true nature and forced children into the molds of adults "mutilated" young people. A boy out of touch with his atavistic inheritance was "under-vitalized and anemic" and precocious development resulted in a "repressed, overtrained, conventionalized manikin."¹²⁵ Hall found in this educational problem a metaphor for understanding the problems faced by primitive peoples in the colonies: "As we are gradually putting the child-world into schools of the latest type, so the primitive men and women of the world are coaxed or constrained to take up the burden of the white man's civilization, and those who can not or will not are following to extinction the larger wild animals about them that resist domestication."¹²⁶ In the end, Hall's view of children informed his ideas about colonial policy. If savages were the

¹²³ Ibid., 747.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 152.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 453.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 649.

evolutionary equivalents of children, then they had a claim to the same rights and privileges that Western children should be granted. It was a view that held primitives in rather low esteem, to be sure, but at the same time it was an effective critique of colonial practices that deserved condemnation. Hall's attitude was paternalistic and imperialistic, but the conflation of children and savages led him to make conclusions about the treatment of colonized peoples that were somewhat progressive:

Their [savages'] faults and their virtues are those of childhood and youth. They need the same careful and painstaking study, lavish care, and adjustment to their nature and needs. The inexorable laws of forcing, precocity, severity, and overwork, produce similar results for both.¹²⁷

Hall expected child study to reform the educational world, bringing pedagogy and curriculum into harmony with the needs and interests of children. He wanted the discipline to have the same impact on colonial policy makers, and he offered child study as a model for creating sound educational strategies for natives: "Every argument for child study at home as the basis of educational methods and matter is greatly reenforced for children and adults of an alien race."¹²⁸ Speaking directly to American interests in the Philippines, Hall wrote:

But genetic psychology, which is at root only common sense at the same time simplified, magnified, and reenforced by examples here as everywhere, has only the plain precept, study and adapt, to develop the best that is indigenous, be patient, adopting a long-ranged policy that does not forget that a century with a race is no more than a year with the individual.¹²⁹

Hall's stance on colonial education was progressive. In dealing with the Pilipino natives, he urged American educators to develop indigenous languages rather than "force out the

¹²⁷ Ibid., 649.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 666.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 665.

native tongue and teach only English in the lower grades.”¹³⁰ He thought teachers should teach the culture’s own traditions and myths, teach native industries so that they may be improved, “teach them respect for their own heroes and patriots,” and “incubate not only self-respect but pride rather than shame of their own race.”¹³¹ Whenever possible, the child should be taught by native teachers. To adapt colonial pedagogy to meet the needs of indigenous peoples required a program that looked very much like child study, and instead of entering the colonial domain and ravishing primitive culture, “we should first of all study the native customs, traditions, sentiments, and ideas, and utilize everything possible, fulfil [sic] and not destroy, as becomes a race professing Christianity.”¹³²

Too often, however, colonizers and missionaries did the opposite. Racial and cultural destruction were legitimized by a conviction that the savage was a depraved and degenerate beast. But such conclusions, thought Hall, were drawn unfairly: notions of inferiority resulted from the unfair imposition of rules and restrictions that primitives found alien and impossible to live by—forcing “civilization” upon a population that had no chance of succeeding to live by its dictates, or interest in doing so, led to violent cultural conflicts. “The friction points between higher and lower races are many,” wrote Hall: missionaries attempted to obliterate primitive sexual customs such as child marriage, and the imposition of “European modes of marriage” injured primitive social organizations and destabilized their societies; the concept of private property had been forced on tribal communities, often depriving them of their own land; the system of wage labor was imposed on people who had previously worked only to meet their basic needs, and primitives “abhor our regular daily system”; and attempts to Christianize natives

¹³⁰ Ibid., 666.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 665.

made little sense in relation to their previous customs.¹³³ These problems caused great conflict, were based upon a misunderstanding of primitive culture, and resulted from unfair and unrealistic expectations that primitive peoples adapt the ways of the conquerors. Civilizing forces knew little of the people they were conquering. Commenting on the English in India, Hall wrote, “the English do not understand the people they govern so well.”¹³⁴ Misunderstanding resulted in uninformed policies, but was also manifested in a sense that primitives were inferior and depraved, and that colonial governance required harsh and strict controls, sometimes leading to violence or programs of cultural assimilation.

Native American boarding schools have been mentioned already, and when examining the history of American efforts to civilize the Indian, Hall offered another child-savage metaphor that was particularly instructive: “Our opinion of Indians is too analogous to that of Calvinists concerning the depravity of infants.”¹³⁵ The quotation begs a question: Savages may have been regarded as children, but *what kind* of children? And while Hall’s position may seem offensive to modern readers, at least it was not hypocritical—he advocated that primitives and Western children be treated in the same way. In the end, his educational prescriptions were ones that any person could appreciate: “every vigorous race, however rude and undeveloped, is, like childhood, worthy of the maximum reverence and care and study.”¹³⁶ It was a pedagogical position that offered great possibilities. But, at the same time, the idea that savages were children, and children savages, could be an exceedingly poisonous one, especially if separated from Hall’s

¹³³ Ibid., 723-724.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 709.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 698.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 748.

educational philosophy. Hall's child-savage was to be embraced and cared for—others, however, thought that the savage should be stamped out of the child, and the child should be beaten from the savage. In both cases, these alternative educational prescriptions were violent, oppressive, and unnatural. *Adolescence* was a good effort, but one gets the impression that it wasn't as closely read as Hall would have wished. Sadly, his legacy may have been in devaluing both groups by allying each with a group Westerners thought inferior. The theory of recapitulation certainly had that potential, and could be an extremely dangerous weapon if it fell into the wrong hands.¹³⁷

Conclusion

To Hall, Western man represented the highest evolutionary stage that existed in the modern world, but that was not to say that the honor would forever remain his. And while savage and primitive groups could never be expected to evolve into copies of Westerners, that did not mean that they were incapable of evolving or unworthy of respect. If savages were truly children, then they always had within them the potential to grow, and it was not certain that Western supremacy would forever remain unchallenged. Indeed, no one knew which group would develop into the next highest incarnation of man:

Our type of civilization may be better in most, as it certainly is in some, respects than any other, but it is at best only a certain group of excellences, and although we are the bearers of the world-consciousness at present, it by no means follows that the highest human perfectibility is along the lines that we have thus far followed.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ For examples see the work of Enzo Traverso and Stephen Jay Gould.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 718.

It was not impossible that groups once regarded as primitive and savage could one day contribute to civilization in ways that nobody could imagine—at the very least, the possibility demanded that primitive cultures be preserved. And Hall sought to encourage development in ways that would allow primitives to find their full potential. Again, the logic applied to the races was applied to children: if their potential was harnessed and developed, they too might develop into something greater.

While adolescence is the great revealer of the past of the race, its earlier stages must be ever surer and safer and the later possibilities ever greater and more prolonged, for it, and not maturity as now defined, is the only point of departure for the superanthropoid that man is to become. This can be only by an ever higher adolescence lifting him to a plane related to his present maturity as that is to the well-adjusted stage of boyhood where our puberty now begins its regenerating metamorphosis.¹³⁹

In savages and children Hall found the past, but each also contained the future. But whether or not they would be allowed to flourish and evolve was not a choice that was in their power to make—educators and colonial policy makers decided how each was treated and determined *what* they wanted to make of them. Such efforts were often harmful, as we have seen. The chapter demonstrates that the ideas of child study were spread, but were the implications those of studies acted upon? Did anybody listen to Hall? Or were only the negative messages from *Adolescence*, of which there were plenty, influential? The extent to which Hall's work affected the education of the adolescent is the subject of the next chapter.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 94.

Chapter Five

The Junior High School and the Betrayal of G. Stanley Hall's Adolescent

*The world goes to school. This has become the method of
colonization and completes the work of conquest by armies.*

G. Stanley Hall (1904)¹

I. G. Stanley Hall and the Problem of Junior High School Historiography

Thus far, the focus of this dissertation has been on the development of adolescence as an idea and how that idea was spread from the academy to the educational world at large.

The next logical step is to discern what, if any, influence Hall's notion of adolescence had on efforts to reform the educational institutions and practices that served adolescents.

A decade after the publication of Hall's work, school districts across the country reorganized their systems in an attempt to meet the unique challenges of educating an expanding adolescent population—and in so doing, those reformers had a clear idea of *who* adolescents were and *what* they needed. To what extent, then, did G. Stanley Hall's work on adolescent development play in those institutional and curricular reforms?

Looking to the junior high school for evidence of Hall's influence is a natural move, but it is one filled with surprises. Influential as Hall's gang of child studiers was, in the decades after *Adolescence* the ideas that had fueled the movement held little appeal for

¹ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology And Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, Vol. 2* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969 [1904]), 494.

public school reformers. Consequently, Hall's contribution to the junior high school movement was limited by the fact that school administrators had become allied with a new set of ideas that bore little resemblance to those found in *Adolescence*. Hall may have brought the debate to the fore, but his voice was soon drowned out by a host of other groups who had their own ideas as to who adolescents were and what they needed.

In the 1910s and 1920s educational reformers carved the junior high school out of the existing educational landscape, removing the ninth grade from high schools and the seventh and eighth grades from elementary schools.² In doing so they invented an entirely new institution, one that sought to harmonize the school with the distinct developmental needs of the adolescent. The junior high school movement was inspired, in part, by *Adolescence* and child study, and its champions frequently echoed G. Stanley Hall:

Distinguished psychologists and educators agree that this is the age at which secondary education should begin—at the beginning of adolescence. This division of time under the Junior High School plan corresponds to the changes in the life of the child. The age at which the pupil enters the Junior High School is the critical moment of his life, when the mental, moral, physical and spiritual life of the child undergoes marvelous changes. At the age of twelve the impulses of adolescence are driving the child to new interests, ambitions, and activities. This is the time when “individuality begins to assert itself.”³

Leonard V. Koos, an influential junior high school advocate from the University of Minnesota, noted that the reorganization of schools should be guided by an awareness of the “particular phases of child nature” and that the school's curriculum should be congruent with “the nature of the child.”⁴ In Cleveland, Ohio, the superintendent of

² Although the 6-3-3 plan was the pattern followed by most junior high schools, grades were reorganized and regrouped in every conceivable way: 6-6, 6-2-4, 6-3-3, 6-3-2, 7-3-2, 7-2-3, 8-5, 7-1-4, 6-5, etc. See Francis L. Cardozo, “The Junior High School—Its Origin and Trend, A Study,” *School Review* 48 (June 1923): 589-603.

³ Joseph Abelson, “A Study of the Junior High School Project,” *Education* 37 (September 1916), 11.

⁴ Leonard V. Koos, “The Peculiar Functions of the Junior High School: Their Relative Importance,” *School Review* 28 (October 1920), 674-675.

schools wrote, “New life and new and enlarged capacities mark the awakening period of transition from childhood to youth,” hoping that his system’s vigorous program of reorganization would help ease adolescents through that difficult transition.⁵ By the 1918-19 school year, 9,500 Cleveland adolescents were enrolled in junior high schools; 5,500 students remained in the upper grammar grades, but the “work of the pupils still remaining in the seventh and eighth grades is being organized so far as possible in harmony with that of the Junior High Schools.”⁶

The rhetorical element of the junior high school movement, with its emphasis on discovering the adolescent’s nature and catering to his interests, was, however, only vaguely Hallian. Junior high school reformers took from Adolescence a general framework from which the problem of adolescent education could be analyzed, but it would be a mistake to credit Hall’s work as being central to the reorganization of the middle grades. In fact, some historians have suggested quite the opposite: “the junior high school emerged in early twentieth century America not as a result of the new child study movement as some have argued, but primarily as a result of the progressive reform forces that honored the values of efficiency and economy.”⁷ Those two values were not particularly important to Hall, who advocated the prolongation of adolescence and urged the school to indulge the adolescent’s every whim—efficient and economical Hall’s curriculum was not. Historian of education Herbert Kliebard found that the junior high school was spawned by the mixing of two opposing schools of curricular thought—

⁵ J.M.H. Frederick, “The Problem of the Adolescent,” *Seventy-eighth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, Cleveland, Ohio* (1914), 14.

⁶ F.E. Spaulding, “Development of Junior High Schools,” *Eighty-second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, Cleveland, Ohio* (1918), 20.

⁷ W. Richard Stephens, “The Junior High School, A Product of Reform Values, 1890-1920,” *Teachers College Journal* 39 (November 1967), 52.

developmentalism and social efficiency—with one focusing on adjusting the school to the child’s psychological and emotional needs, while the other sought to prepare students for their future social and economic duties. Hall rejected the social efficiency rationale as coarse and anti-intellectual, and there was much about the junior high school that contradicted many of his most fundamental educational precepts. At best, the institution represented an odd concoction of Hallian ideas and the utilitarian aims of social efficiency educators. “The large-scale incorporation of the junior high school into the American educational ladder,” wrote Kliebard, “is one more instance where the success of an important innovation benefited by the fact that the ideas of two or more powerful interest groups intersected at that point.”⁸

Nor was Hall’s work solely responsible for initiating debate on the reorganization of education for adolescents. As one historian has written, much of the impetus for junior high school reform came in the decade prior to *Adolescence*:

It is always true with regard to historical causation that there is no place or “point in time” that a movement begins; one can be identified as the effect of some previous cause. Thus the origin of the Junior High School can be traced back through many events, almost ad infinitum.⁹

Just how far back the junior high’s historical roots extend is not clear, but the movement to reorganize the upper-primary grades was well under way by the time Hall published his opus. Most reformers began their historical sketches of the movement with the National Education Associations’s “Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary

⁸ Herbert Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 108.

⁹ Carole S. Ford, “The Origins of the Junior High School,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Teachers College, 1982), 64.

School Studies” (1893), the first major plan for school reorganization issued at a national level. According to the Committee,

It is impossible to make a satisfactory secondary school programme, limited to a period of four years, and founded on the present elementary school subjects and methods. In the opinion of the Committee, several subjects now reserved for high schools—such as algebra, geometry, natural sciences, and foreign languages—should be begun earlier than now, and therefore within the schools classified as elementary; or, as an alternative, the secondary school period should be made to begin two years earlier than at present, leaving six years instead of eight for the elementary school period.¹⁰

Hall opposed the Committee of Ten’s report for a number of reasons, but what he found most distasteful was its failure to take into consideration the developmental aspects of curricular reform. The Committee, he thought, was overly concerned with efficient preparation for college and their recommendations sought to introduce into the middle grades subjects that its students were not yet mature enough to pursue—most adolescents were not developmentally ready for advanced studies, nor were they by nature interested in those subjects. The Report, wrote Hall, “ignores the fact that the average youth of high school age, and especially in the early teens, has not so far reached the age of reason that logical methods can be made supreme.”¹¹

Also influential in the movement to reorganize the schools was the NEA’s Committee on College-Entrance Requirements (1899) which also acknowledged the importance of the adolescent period: “the seventh grade, rather than the ninth, is the natural turning point in the child’s life, as the age of adolescence demands new methods and wiser direction.”¹² Like the Committee of Ten, the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements sought to provide adolescents with a college-preparatory curriculum that

¹⁰ Quoted in Charles H Judd, “The Junior High School,” *The School Review* 24 (April 1916), 255.

¹¹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 512.

¹² Quoted in Leonard V. Koos, *The Junior High School* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1927), 5.

would ease the transition from secondary schools to institutions of higher learning. The idea did not appeal to Hall: “To fit for present entrance examinations involves an at least temporary unfitting for life. It is too sedentary, clerical, bookish, and noetic, and...may fail to appeal to the best powers of youth.”¹³

“It was probably inevitable,” writes a historian of the junior high school, “once the upper elementary grades were marked for curricular and organizational changes, suggestions would be made for separating them entirely from the elementary schools.”¹⁴ But the logic of separation sometimes ran counter to Hall’s recommendations. Thus, Hall contributed to an ongoing debate concerning the educational needs of adolescents, but he did not define the terms of that conversation. In fact, he was sometimes left out of it completely: “concern for the psyche of the adolescent was not the most significant factor in the initial establishment of the junior high school.”¹⁵ It would be a mistake to exaggerate the role that Hall played in the creation of the junior high; sometimes the only thing that Hall and the junior high school reformers had in common was a concern for adolescence. But each understood adolescent needs differently, and frequently their recommendations were diametrically opposed.

At the same time, however, Hall was an influential figure. And even though some historians have minimized the impact that his work had on the reformation of adolescent education, those efforts cannot be totally dismissed. As Edward Krug has written, “it was Hall who gained the reputation as a liberal who forced the secondary school to consider

¹³ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 513.

¹⁴ Ford, “The Origins of the Junior High School,” 80.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

the nature and needs of the adolescent.”¹⁶ Hall’s urging that schools focus on adolescent needs and interests clearly had some impact, even though schoolmen in the decades immediately following *Adolescence* understood those needs differently than Hall had. Krug also noted that it was “the child study movement in particular that placed upon the high school the burden of proving that it was not falling behind in the onward march of educational progress.”¹⁷ Again, it was a matter of interpretation—child study demanded that schools conform to children’s interest, but defining what those interests were depended on the agenda of the observer. Recapitulatory theorists would find that adolescents were interested in a liberal arts curriculum that was organized historically, while social efficiency educators were more likely to discover that young people were interested in getting a start on their future careers. “Interest” was far too nebulous a term to remain distinctly Hallian, and adolescents were too important to too many people to ensure that their educational futures would be determined by a single reform group. Indeed, as Kliebard suggests, the adolescent curriculum was a battleground on which reformers of many different strands fought to gain supremacy. In this context, it becomes clear that Hall’s legacy, while present, was not the strongest force.

By the early 1920s, though still in its formative stage, it seemed as if the junior high school had found a permanent home in the American educational system. As one educator put it, “So strongly has the...idea taken hold that not only school men but of the public in general that no school system is now considered complete without its junior high school organization. Practically every city that does not have such an organization is

¹⁶ Edward A. Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School, 1880-1920* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 120.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

planning to have it.”¹⁸ On the whole, however, the junior high school has received little attention from educational historians. And despite the fact that it was the first major effort to reform the education of adolescents, its history remains elusive. David Tyack and Larry Cuban regard it as a rather minor movement: “In 1920, 94 percent of secondary schools still followed the traditional pattern of four years on top of eight years of elementary school, only 0.4 percent were free-standing junior high schools, and the rest were combined junior-senior high schools.”¹⁹ Regardless of those unimpressive numbers, however, they represent the beginning of an important educational movement; the fact remains that the junior high school would eventually become the standard model for adolescent education.

A closer examination of junior high statistics demonstrates that the institution’s growth was, in fact, quite dramatic: one national survey revealed that only sixty-eight junior high schools existed in 1915, but ten years later there were 2,268.²⁰ Enrollment leapt from 37,331 in 1920 to 383,417 only four years later—an increase of 927 percent—and the number of junior high teachers tripled between 1918 and 1924, from about 7,000 to roughly 21,000.²¹ The junior high school movement, in the words of one educator, “was sweeping the country.” In an address to the National Education Association in 1916 he noted that, even though the movement had only begun, the NEA had already

made it first a field of investigation, then a propaganda and slogan, now a constructive program for development. The Department of Superintendence has embodied it in its resolutions. The United States Bureau stands committed to it.

¹⁸ W.S. Deffenbaugh, “Significant Movements in City School Systems,” *Bulletin* 8, U.S. Bureau of Education (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 27.

¹⁹ David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 71.

²⁰ Aubrey Augustus Douglass, “The Present Status of the Junior High School,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 22 (June 1915), 254; *The Junior High School Curriculum, Department of Superintendence Fifth Yearbook* (Washington D.C., 1927), 25-9.

²¹ *The Junior High School Curriculum*, 25-9; 59.

Many state departments are making it state wide. Large cities are adopting it wholesale...Local city politics find it useful, popular...University departments of education and normal schools...are finding new aspects of professional preparation for this type of teaching...Textbook houses, with expected enterprise, are announcing a new junior high school series of textbooks...There is a literature, a terminology, a lingo, a cult...²²

Historians of education have not shared the widespread interest that school reformers had for junior high schools, and their neglect constitutes a significant gap in educational historiography. The oversight is particularly surprising given the field's focus on the history of urban school reform, which began in the 1960s—a great number of metropolitan districts were experimenting with the junior high school by 1920, a trend which could not have gone unnoticed by historians. The omission is most pronounced in works where junior high school history would have been most relevant. It is curious, for instance, that Ellwood Cubberley reduced his treatment of the junior high to a single page, even though he was writing at the height of the junior high frenzy and in a state that was leading the way in implementing the reform.²³ Lawrence Cremin did not include the junior high school in his treatment of progressive education, even though it was a major progressive reform; David Tyack hardly mentioned it in his history of urban education, despite that the junior high was in many ways a response to problems unique to the urban environment; and Herbert Kliebard ignored it in his recent history of vocational education, a startling omission given the fact that the junior high played a significant role in the development of the manual and industrial arts.²⁴ David Angus and Jeffrey Mirel

²² Quoted in Larry Cuban, "What Happens to Reforms that Last? The Case of the Junior High School," *American Educational Researcher* 29 (Summer 1992), 236.

²³ Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States: A Study and Interpretation of American Educational History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919), 554-555.

²⁴ Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961); David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American*

barely made reference to the junior high school in their work on Grand Rapids, Michigan, despite the fact that the city was a leader in the movement.²⁵ Finally, and perhaps most significantly, was Joseph F. Kett's failure to include it in his history of adolescence.²⁶

Part of the problem is that the junior high school movement does not provide historians with a cohesive historical narrative, making it difficult for them to examine the "movement" as a whole. As Larry Cuban has written, "No coherent, consistent mission for the junior high school...could be stitched together from the diversity of dreams for the junior high school."²⁷ To write the history of an institution that had no center is not an easy task. Indeed, if "the junior high school does not exist, anyway, except in name," can its history even be written?²⁸ At the same time, however, junior high school reform is an important chapter in the history of adolescence and, consequently, should not be ignored. Its purposes and rationales may have been diffuse and unorganized, but that was merely a reflection of the ambiguous stance that adults held toward adolescents. A junior high school, in whatever form it assumed in any given district, indicated how adults thought about adolescents—that the institutionalization and implementation of the reform took so many different shapes is evidence that adolescence, still a new concept, meant many things to many people. Historian of childhood LeRoy Ashby offers an instructive piece of advice for those interested in understanding reform movements that targeted children: "Adults spoke for [children], of course, but historically with many voices and changing agendas. Those responses invariably told far more about adult needs, expectations,

Urban Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977); Herbert M. Kliebard, *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999).

²⁵ David L. Angus and Jeffrey E. Mirel, *The Failed Promise of the American High School, 1890-1995* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999).

²⁶ Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

²⁷ Cuban, "What Happens to Reforms that Last?" 236.

²⁸ Thomas H. Briggs, "Possibilities of the Junior High School," *Education* 37 (January 1917), 289.

anxieties, status, and ideologies than about the children themselves.”²⁹ The junior high school was clearly a deviation from Hall’s child study movement—its core values were primarily business-oriented and its history and reveals more about the economic concerns of adults than anything else. And though junior high school reformers sought to define the “nature” of adolescence, as Hall had, their visions were limited by their utilitarian and materialistic aims.

Joesph Kett suggests that the history of adolescence is, in some respects, the history of competing visions of childhood. Groups interested in reforming the adolescent experience approached the problem for different reasons, and with varying degrees of success:

G. Stanley Hall’s *Adolescence*, published in 1904, was the seminal book, but direct radiations from Hall’s work formed just one element in the process. All sorts of individuals—earnest humanitarian reformers, boys-workers, nervous parents, school bureaucrats, and academicians—stumbled onto the study of adolescence after 1900, sometimes drawing inspiration from Hall, sometimes not.³⁰

The junior high school sometimes found inspiration in Hall; at other times it ignored him completely. Still, even though the two were often at odds with one another, a historical understanding of adolescence requires an examination of both Hall and the junior high schoolers.

²⁹ LeRoy Ashby, *Endangered Children: Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 1-2.

³⁰ Kett, *Rites of Passage*, 216-217.

II. A “Condition Approaching Chaos”: The Early History of Junior High School Reform, 1915-1925

During the Progressive Era, enrollment in the nation’s high schools skyrocketed. According to Tyack, the number of secondary enrollees rose from 202,963 in 1890 to 1,645,171 in 1918, an increase of 711 percent.³¹ The junior high school was, in many respects, a response to this growth in secondary schooling—educational reformers were concerned that the primary school offered poor preparation for high school studies, leaving freshmen bewildered when they began their work. More problematic was that the curriculum traditionally received by seventh and eighth graders did not speak to the interests and needs of adolescents. The purpose of elementary education, it was frequently written, was to provide students with basic tools for learning. But junior high school advocates considered six years to be adequate time to accomplish the goal, leading to the frequent charge that the upper elementary grades were wasteful, uninspiring, and repetitive. Adolescents, who had outgrown the elementary school’s curriculum and method of instruction, were left to languish for two years’ time, prompting many to quit school altogether. Hall was aware of the problem: “It is possible for most children in this country to leave the school forever at fourteen...Most do leave at this age never to return, and many of them are never again interested in educational pursuits.”³²

The problem was that the elementary school had never been designed to prepare students for high school—the evolution of the common school occurred in the mid-nineteenth century, independent from the development of public schooling at the secondary level, which, as a mass institution, did not occur until the turn of the twentieth century: “The high school and the elementary school developed separately in this

³¹ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 183.

³² Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 505.

country, and there has always been a sharp break between them which has led many pupils to leave school at the end of the eighth grades.”³³ And the high school, for its part, had never been conceived of as an institution of mass schooling; rather, it was an opportunity that had been open to only a small minority of the population. As historian William Reese has written, “the selective pattern of high school recruitment—drawing upon many grammar schools but especially a few dominated by the native middle classes—meant that the ‘people’s college’ largely served the more advantaged citizens. Most high school pupils by mid-century came from the relatively privileged native born.”³⁴ Reese’s findings echo statements made by early twentieth-century schoolmen, who considered America’s first high schools to be elitist and undemocratic.

The eight-and-four plan of American schools was not the product of a struggle for democracy. Everyone who belongs to the generation of present-day adults knows that in 1880 the high school was not a democratic institution...The American high school was at its inception the home of the professional class.³⁵

“Undemocratic,” perhaps, but high school attendance was not an opportunity that was sorely missed by many: “In a time when few employers required their employees to be high school graduates, and when entry positions were abundant for youth with meager schooling, the great majority of the population acted as if the high school was superfluous.”³⁶ But bountiful employment opportunities did not continue into the twentieth century, and enrollment in secondary schools increased as the number of jobs available to young people decreased. As Viviana A. Zelizer has demonstrated, the reasons for this decline were numerous and complicated: industrialization and

³³ *Seventy-Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Detroit, For the Year Ending 06/30/1920* (1920), 11.

³⁴ William J. Reese, *The Origins of the American High School* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 180.

³⁵ Charles H. Judd, “The Junior High School,” *School Review* 23 (January 1915), 28.

³⁶ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 59.

mechanization, higher family incomes, more effective compulsory education laws, campaigns to outlaw child labor, and a profound moral and cultural shift that redefined the child “exclusively as an object of sentiment and not as an agent of production,” all contributed to the decline in the number of jobs available to adolescents.³⁷ With fewer children going to work, more turned to the high school to occupy their time and to improve their prospects for future employment.

This marked increase in enrollment was accompanied by a change in the mission of the public high school—as Thomas Briggs of Columbia University’s Teachers College observed: “Then the secondary school was considered to a large extent a sifter, to preserve only those with most ability to do abstract thinking; today it is considered rather a sorter, to classify those with similar abilities and needs, of whatever kind, so that they can be most adequately satisfied.”³⁸ A diversified student body required a diversified curriculum, and it was clear that the uniform course of academic study proposed by the Committee of Ten would not satisfy the needs of the majority of the high school’s new students; increasingly, the institution focused more and more on practical subjects, manual arts, domestic science, and on preparing students for careers after graduation. As Kliebard has written, the reorganization of the secondary school curriculum along practical lines left virtually no aspect of the high school’s mission untouched: “Preparation for a particular occupational role, including attending college as a form of occupation, has permeated the justifications for virtually all school subjects.”³⁹

³⁷ Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 72.

³⁸ Briggs, “Possibilities of the Junior High School,” 280.

³⁹ Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 128.

As more children transitioned from the elementary to the secondary grades, reformers became increasingly concerned that their system lacked a coherent and articulated plan for promotion—the jump from one level to the next, they often lamented, was too jarring: “The most serious indictment against the 8-4 organization was the abruptness of transition between the 8-year elementary school and the 4-year secondary school.”⁴⁰ The junior high school was an attempt to ease that transition and its “chief contribution to any school system must be the realization of its purpose to weld together the units making up that system.”⁴¹ For the first time, then, reformers sought to create a fully articulated, cohesive educational system. As the superintendent of Detroit wrote, when considering the role that the junior high school was to play in unifying the primary and secondary levels of schooling, the aim was to develop “a unified instructional policy from Grades 1-12.”⁴²

Reformers considered the traditional elementary school to have been unresponsive and irrelevant to adolescent needs, and this problem became more pronounced when an increasing number of adolescents remained in school for longer periods of time. The concern was that a relevant and meaningful curriculum was not offered until the beginning of high school; meanwhile, adolescents remained stranded in the elementary school until the age of fourteen, receiving an uninspired and redundant education. The schools, in their failure to recognize the true starting point of adolescence, were wasting valuable time: “When he is fourteen or fifteen he will be half through the critical period of adolescence. If you want to influence an adolescent in a large way, you

⁴⁰ Cardozo, “The Junior High School—Its Origin and Trend,” 594.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *The Eightieth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Detroit for the Year Ending June 30th, 1923* (1923), 21.

must begin at twelve, not fourteen.”⁴³ A school system in tune with the needs of adolescents would begin to offer an improved education earlier in the child’s educational career. As one writer noted,

For many years the assumption that relatively sudden and abrupt changes take place in the individual at the age of approximately fourteen years has been made the justification of our present division between elementary and secondary education. More recent studies of the phenomena of adolescence have been interpreted to indicate that the adolescent period usually begins at an earlier period than at the age of fourteen, probably nearer the age of twelve. As a result the assertion is now made that the high school should begin at this age.⁴⁴

The junior high school, in jettisoning the traditional curriculum that had served the seventh and eighth grades, allied itself with the social efficiency rationale that had overtaken the high school. And in so doing, it incorporated many of the practical and vocational aims that characterized the new, “comprehensive” high school. As Edward Krug has written, “Prominently put forward as advantageous features of the new institution were the advancement of practical subjects, the provision for early differentiation, and the fostering of socialized aims.”⁴⁵ Reformers were bold in their aims, requiring that the junior high school offer its students “a program of studies differing from the course of study to be found in the like numbered grades of the traditional school in America.”⁴⁶ To accomplish that goal would entail a complete overhaul of the intermediate grades, and the number of proposed changes were many: new and separate buildings, a specially trained staff of teachers, a reorganization of teaching responsibilities along departmental lines, the development of multiple curricular tracks to

⁴³ Charles H Judd, “The Junior High School,” (April 1916), 253.

⁴⁴ Alexander Inglis, “A Fundamental Problem in the Reorganization of the High School,” *School Review* 5 (May 1915), 308-309.

⁴⁵ Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School*, 330.

⁴⁶ National Education Association, “Creating a Curriculum for Adolescent Youth,” *Research Bulletin of the National Education Association* 6 (No. 1, 1923), 5.

meet the diverse needs of the student body, the implementation of guidance programs, widespread opportunities for elective courses, and, most importantly, the redefinition of the school's entire mission so that it would be "in accordance with the needs of early adolescence."⁴⁷

Unfortunately, the reform was easier to envision than it was to implement, and the ambitious plans of the junior high school reformers frequently came to naught. Reformers and administrators were often dismayed by the very real fact that often junior high schools were nothing more than truncated upper elementary schools—students had been moved to new buildings, but regularly without the many changes that junior high school reformers had recommended. The movement embraced the idea that adolescence was a distinct stage of life, one that required a revitalized curriculum, but it was difficult to implement concrete curricular reforms. As Charles Judd put it in 1915: "Too often the school system which adopts the new plan does not make a sufficiently radical reorganization. The first years of the junior high school perpetuate the unprogressive, uneconomical traditions of the seventh and eighth grades."⁴⁸

Qualifications of this sort abound in the reports of superintendents who were reorganizing the schools in their districts. "The Junior High," wrote Columbus, Ohio's, superintendent, "is not an elementary school...If it has any justification for its existence it is that it is intended to do more for the pupils of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades than was done under the old organization."⁴⁹ L.C. Ward, superintendent at Fort Wayne, Indiana, complained that his district had not incorporated any of the fundamental changes

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Charles H. Judd, "The Junior High School," January 1915), 33.

⁴⁹ *Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Columbus for the School Year Ending August 31st, 1910* (1910), 130.

that characterized a “real” junior high school. As a result, Fort Wayne’s first junior high did not sufficiently distance itself from its elementary and secondary cousins; rather than developing into an autonomous and unique institution, it simply reproduced traditional administrative, curricular, and pedagogical practices. The establishment of this “so-called” junior high was insufficient, wrote Ward, for it brought “no changes in principals, no change in teachers... [and] inconsiderable changes in equipment or building arrangement.”⁵⁰ Fort Wayne’s junior high school segregated adolescents, but did not offer them distinct educational opportunities.

Too often, reformers complained, junior high schools were established simply as “administrative devices”⁵¹ which sought to relieve congestion at overcrowded elementary and secondary schools, a rationale reflected in school board reports time and time again: “In order to relieve the crowded condition at North High and ultimately other high schools,” wrote Columbus’ superintendent, “and to meet the increasing demands upon the upper elementary grades, the Board has declared itself in favor of the Junior High School System.”⁵² Reformers, who thought that junior high school building programs should be guided by sophisticated philosophical justifications, and not by spatial or architectural emergencies, scorned such utilitarian motives for reorganization.

The mission for junior high school reformers was to carve out a new niche in their educational systems, not to alleviate cramped conditions. Wrote the superintendent for Topeka, Kansas, on his system’s newest addition:

⁵⁰ L.C. Ward, “The Junior High School Abandoned at Fort Wayne, Indiana,” *Elementary School Journal* 22 (May 1922), 647.

⁵¹ A. Laura McGregor, “Preparing Teachers for the Junior High School,” *Educational Review* 69 (March 1925), 142.

⁵² *Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Columbus for the School Year Ending August 31st, 1909* (1909), 168.

If this school is to face its responsibility definitely and in an untrammelled way, both teachers and school administrators must see clearly that this type of school is neither an elementary school or a high school. It is an intermediate school and must adopt itself, from the standpoint of subject-matter opportunities, and organization of student interests and needs and teaching techniques, to the promotion of such development in children as is normal at this stage of the school progress.⁵³

Failure to reorganize schooling sufficiently for adolescents would simply perpetuate the very problems that reformers were trying to eradicate in the first place: an undemocratic curriculum not in harmony with the individual's needs; duplication of materials previously covered in the elementary school course; an education disconnected from social realities; lack of articulation between the branches of schooling; and the inability of traditional programs to improve retention rates. Worse, the establishment of intermediate schools without system-wide reconceptualizations could actually harm students, throwing them into a "condition approaching chaos" where teachers and administrators had not adopted the necessary progressive techniques required if the reform was to be worthwhile.⁵⁴ Fort Wayne's junior high school, which the district abandoned as a failure, demonstrated that ill-conceived junior high school plans could hinder student development:

All departments reported a loss in ability of entering pupils to concentrate upon the subject at hand, a loss in ability to work, a looseness of morale, and a failure in reasonable discipline which we had not heretofore known. And those failures increased progressively from year to year.⁵⁵

Fort Wayne provided reformers with a cautionary tale: it was preferable to hold off on the development of junior high schools until a district had carefully studied the problems

⁵³ "Intermediate Schools," *Report of the Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas, for the Year Ending 07/01/14 and 1915* (1915), 47.

⁵⁴ Koos, *The Junior High School*.

⁵⁵ Ward, "The Junior High School Abandoned At Fort Wayne," 648.

and planned accordingly. Those warnings were intended by reformers to be taken seriously, although in the frenzy to open up new schools they often seem to have gone unheeded.

If the junior high school's educational program was to be guided by pedagogical and curricular rationales distinct from its elementary and secondary counterparts, then it followed that junior high school teachers also needed to undergo a thorough "remaking" if the institution was to have its intended effect. One of the greatest failures of Fort Wayne's experiment, noted the superintendent, was that its teaching corps had been ineffective: "The teachers in those schools were for the most part middle-aged women who had been transferred from the elementary grades without any particular preparation for special work."⁵⁶ Again, warnings were sounded: a junior high school without qualified teachers would be a junior high in name only.

If qualified teachers cannot be found, the feasible thing for a community to do is to delay the organization of a Junior High School until such teachers are obtained. One reason why some school superintendents have been slow to introduce the Junior High School is because they realize that it would be a failure without teachers who know its aims and methods.⁵⁷

The danger that intermediate schools would become mere replicas of the schools on either side of the educational divide was a very real one, especially when teachers had not received adequate preparation for their new roles:

The general attitude seems to be that the immediate transfer from grades to junior high school is but an emergency expedient. Just as the junior high school buildings were at first usually reconstructed grade buildings, so the junior high school teachers were often reconstructed grade teachers; and often the reconstruction in both cases was too hasty for the good of the institution.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid., 647.

⁵⁷ W.S. Deffenbaugh, "Secondary Education in 1921 and 1922," *Bulletin* 12, U.S. Bureau of Education (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 337.

⁵⁸ Herbert H. Foster, "Student-Teaching and the Training of the Junior High School Teacher," *Educational Administration and Supervision* 8 (September 1922), 351.

Unfortunately, for the junior high school and its sponsors, there was no confederation of trained or experienced intermediate teachers waiting in the wings. Nor were teacher training programs focused on the problem: “The colleges have yet begun to graduate many persons who have made a study of the aims and methods of the Junior High School.”⁵⁹ During the formative period of development the *only* source of teachers was from elementary or high schools; hiring teachers other than “reconstructed” ones was not a viable option. Thomas W. Gosling, founding principal of the Lafayette Bloom Junior High School in Cincinnati, which opened in 1915, knew well the problems of selecting teachers for the junior high school. Gosling noted that securing excellent teachers was “the most difficult problem” facing the junior high school

because [it] is a new institution with a new program of studies and with a new social purpose. If the teaching in this new institution is to be done by teachers who follow the old traditions and who fail to catch the vision of a new method and a new opportunity, it is not likely that the junior high school will be able to accomplish the purpose for which it was intended.⁶⁰

To ask the central question—Who were to become junior high school teachers?—was more or less to ask whether those new posts were to be filled by elementary or secondary teachers.

Junior high school principals across the Midwest responded to this question in different ways. Some relied on elementary school teachers, while others sought (generally without success) secondary teachers; some administrators placed experience at a premium, while others favored well-educated and progressive novices. Several factors

⁵⁹ Deffenbaugh, “Secondary Education in 1921 and 1922,” 337.

⁶⁰ T.W. Gosling, “The Selection and the Training of Teachers for Junior High Schools,” *Eighteenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I* (Bloomington, Ill: Public School Publishing Company, 1919), 167.

determined the source of new teaching corps, but the most important seemed to be a particular school's organizational format. Combined junior-senior high schools, in which the elementary and secondary grades were divided on the 6-6 plan, where an autonomous junior high school "department" existed within an already established high school, had a teaching corps that was mixed—roughly half of the teachers in such buildings had elementary school experience, with the remainder having taught at the secondary level. At six-six schools, elementary transfers taught in the seventh and eighth grades, while high school teachers retained their duties instructing freshman.⁶¹ Junior departments did not typically undergo radical reorganizations, at least not to the degree that reformers desired. Schools operating on the six-six plan often seemed to have been little more than overburdened high schools, and their teachers were at times criticized for focusing on academic subjects while neglecting other aspects of the junior high's mission. According to one principal from Grand Rapids, the academic subjects should be "a secondary matter."⁶² As David Tyack and Larry Cuban have written, it was common for junior high school departments following the six-six organizational format to be little more than replicas of the high schools to which they were attached. "It is easier to copy another institution than it is to invent one from the ground up," they write. "Would-be innovative schools often come to traditional ones."⁶³

Schools of the 6-3-3 type, the arrangement preferred by reformers, were generally staffed by elementary school teachers, which accounted for a different kind of lopsidedness: the neglect of serious academic or vocational pursuits and the perpetuation

⁶¹ Thomas Briggs, *The Junior High School* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920).

⁶² *Forty-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, School Year Ending July 1, 1920* (1920), 57.

⁶³ Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, 73.

of irrelevant or repetitive lessons lacking in value for adolescents. One must remain sensitive to the range of local variation found in this history, but at the same time some generalizations can be made: junior high school teachers tended to teach the grades they taught prior to reorganization. Furthermore, junior high schools tended to model the level of schooling from which its teachers had been drawn:

In one case we have a junior high school building in which the teaching and methods are the same as the elementary school. In another case we have a junior high school building where teaching and methods are the same as the old four-year high school. In neither case do we have a real junior high school that meets the needs of junior high school boys and girls who are different from elementary pupils and still different from senior high school students.⁶⁴

Reformers excoriated this practice, guided as it was by convenience and tradition, and not by well-formulated junior high school logic. But without a trained corps of specialized teachers at the ready, reassignment proved to be the only practical solution to the problem.

Grand Rapids, Michigan, opened three new junior high schools between 1923 and 1926, but none of the new teachers were from high schools.⁶⁵ Minneapolis' first junior high school, which opened in 1916, had no high school transfers, and women who had previously been in charge of grades seven and eight taught all the school's academic subjects.⁶⁶ Hannibal, Missouri's, two junior high schools, both of which opened in 1915, had teaching corps comprising exclusively teachers from the elementary schools, ranging

⁶⁴ W.D. Armentrout, "The Theory of the Junior High School," *Education* 39 (May 1919), 540.

⁶⁵ *Annual of the Board of Education, 1922-1923* (1923). Volumes for the 1923-24 and 1925-26 were also used.

⁶⁶ *Directory, Minneapolis Public Schools, Officials Teachers and Employees, 1915-1916* (1916); also see the directory for 1916-1917.

from grades one through eight.⁶⁷ The same can be said of Bloom School in Cincinnati, where all members of the founding corps were from the elementary schools that sent students to the new school.⁶⁸ The composition of the teaching corps at these schools followed the national trend:

The majority of junior high school teachers have had their experience in the elementary grades, 29 per cent only having had experience in the senior high school. About two-thirds of the teachers now working in the junior high school have had experience in that type of school before this year. The median length of experience in the junior high school itself is about one and one-half years.⁶⁹

Reassignment from the upper elementary grades to the junior high school did not sufficiently guarantee that a new educational model would be instituted, and experience within the seventh and eighth grades did not ensure that teachers would be committed to or even familiar with the rationale for this great experiment. As one principal put it,

It is scarcely worthwhile to undertake the task of organizing the Junior High School, with all of its complex problems, unless the teachers who are to be selected for the work show some promise of grasping the meaning of their new responsibilities.⁷⁰

But it was not always clear to teachers what they were getting into. Reassignment was an arbitrary process. According to Philip W. L. Cox, founding principal of Ben Blewett Junior High School in St. Louis, which opened its doors in 1917, “fully a third of the staff was transferred to the junior high school without having been consulted and contrary to their personal preferences.” Worse, “several of the teachers had never heard of such an

⁶⁷ *Forty-Ninth and Fiftieth Annual Reports of the Public Schools of Hannibal, Missouri: 1914-1915, 1915-1916* (1916); *Fifty-First, Fifty-Second, and Fifty-Third Annual Reports of the Public Schools of Hannibal, Missouri: 1916-1917, 1917-1918, 1918-1919* (1919).

⁶⁸ *Minutes of the Board of Education, 11/9/14-07/1/1916, Volume 30* (1916), 366.

⁶⁹ Samuel Bechtel Stayer, “The Status of Teachers in Junior High Schools,” *School Review* 29 (May 1921), 387.

⁷⁰ Gosling, “The Selection and the Training of Teachers for Junior High Schools,” 171.

institution as a junior high school.”⁷¹ Junior high schools were organized rather haphazardly, and it was clear that in such an environment many teachers would not have “grasped the meaning” of their new jobs.

Junior high school teachers were expected to combine attributes of both elementary and secondary teachers into a new and progressive teaching style. Departmental teaching, which assigned a teacher to one or two branches of study, required specialized knowledge of the sort secondary teachers possessed. At the same time, teachers were also to have “natural” dispositions such as sympathy and caring that were usually regarded as traits belonging to successful elementary school teachers. Wrote N.C. Hieronimus, of the junior high school at Richmond, Indiana: “No training can make a really successful junior high school teacher unless the individual to be trained has certain very natural qualifications, both physical and mental.”⁷² C.F. Switzer, of Grand Rapids, considered “a genuine sympathetic and helpful disposition” to be as important as experience and breadth of scholarship.⁷³ The goal of the junior high school in Rochester, New York, was to develop a teaching corps “so thoroughly acquainted with every member of the student body that each one will be assured a real opportunity to develop in health, mental and manual power, personality, and character.”⁷⁴ And, finally, the school board of Flint, Michigan, required that its junior high school teachers take a philosophical approach adolescent education:

The teacher must have a good knowledge of adolescent characteristics and really enjoy working with young people. She must have extra patience, extra sympathy, and a saving sense of humor. Because of the exploratory and guiding functions of

⁷¹ Philip W. L. Cox, “The Ben Blewett Junior High School, St. Louis, MO. An Experiment in Democracy,” in R.L. Lyman and P.W.L. Cox, eds., *Junior High School Practices: A Collection of Articles Dealing With the Junior High School* (New York: Laidlaw Brothers, 1925), 67.

⁷² Ibid., 188.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ McGregor, “Preparing Teachers for the Junior High School,” 142.

the junior-high-school this teacher must have a keen sense of the deeper meanings of life and life's relations and definite training in educational diagnosis, prognosis, and guidance.⁷⁵

It is difficult to determine whether or not intermediate teachers possessed the sort of dispositions described above, but the literature suggests that they generally failed to radically alter their teaching strategies when reassigned to the junior high school. A primary problem was that most junior high teachers had been culled from the elementary ranks—their experience and level of training, different from their high school counterparts', greatly influenced the new institution which, all too often, felt more like an elementary school than anything else:

The teachers in the elementary schools have received their training in the normal schools while the high school teachers are college graduates. Those who receive their training in normal schools emphasize methods and the pupil; the college graduates received very little professional training while the subject matter has been emphasized. This causes a distinctly different type of teaching in the high school from that of the elementary school. The methods of discipline also differ very widely in the elementary school and the high school.⁷⁶

In an era when elementary school teachers generally had less formal education than high school teachers, junior high teachers—previously elementary teachers—also had lower levels of educational attainment than secondary teachers. Time and time again, junior high school teachers—despite pleas and regulations—fell behind high school teachers in educational qualifications. In Lawrence, Kansas, 51 percent of the intermediate teachers held four-year degrees compared to 88 percent of the high school teachers in that district.⁷⁷ In Anderson, Indiana, only five of the junior high's twenty-

⁷⁵ Quoted in NEA, "Creating a Curriculum for Adolescent Youth," 19.

⁷⁶ Armentrout, "The Theory of the Junior High School," 537.

⁷⁷ Henry P. Smith, "The Salary Schedule of the Lawrence Public Schools, Its Operation and Effects," *A Report to the Board of Education, Lawrence, Kansas, for the Period, July 1920-August 1924* (1924), 73.

three teachers held college degrees,⁷⁸ while in Superior, Wisconsin, only twenty-nine out of sixty-four teachers had the “desired level of education.”⁷⁹ Minneapolis’ hiring policy was followed almost universally by the schools investigated in this study: college educated teachers were preferred, but “in the origin and early development of the junior high schools,” exceptions would be made.⁸⁰ The goal reformers had for their staffs was clear: “The teachers of a junior high school should be college graduates of the same standard demanded of the senior high school and should be on the same salary schedule.”⁸¹ But the goal proved unrealistic and never in its formative stage did the junior high school attract teachers who measured up to the educational standards set by reformers.

The success of this new institution, according to many, hinged upon its teachers. And though the “junior high school idea” was spreading across the country at dizzying speeds, reformers urged school boards to temper their desires to implement the new schools, at least until its staffing problems faced had been resolved: “Unless [the principal] can find promising, even if untrained material in this group, he most likely will do well to postpone the institution of his plan to a more favorable time.”⁸²

Such warnings advised local reformers to plan their reorganizational efforts carefully, lest the junior high school movement “become a mere mushroom affair.”⁸³ But the warnings may have come too late. Junior high school teachers—little more than relocated elementary or secondary school teachers—were caught in this chaos. They were

⁷⁸ *A Report on the School System of Anderson, Indiana, 1917-18* (1918).

⁷⁹ Fred Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Organization, Administration, Finance and Certain Other Aspects of the Public School System of Superior, Wisconsin. School Year 1924-1925* (1925), 92.

⁸⁰ *Directory, Minneapolis Public Schools, Officials Teachers and Employees, 1924-1925* (1925).

⁸¹ Paul C. Stetson, “The Junior High School,” *Vocational Education* 3 (September 1913), 30.

⁸² Gosling, “The Selection and the Training of Teachers for Junior High Schools,” 171.

⁸³ J.A. Clement, “Current Practices in the Organization and Administration of Junior High Schools,” *School Review* 30 (February 1922), 110.

required to adapt to new demands placed on them by reconstituted workplaces that often originated without sufficient forethought or planning. Developing a new professional ethos, that of the “junior high school teacher,” while simultaneously attempting to navigate through a reform that was both complex and confusing, challenged junior high school teachers in every way—the junior high school idea quite literally sought to redefine every aspect of their profession, but history demonstrates that the reformers’ goals rarely became established practice.

In the formative stage of junior high school development, reformers agreed that certain aspects of the junior high school’s mission should be standardized, but those standards generally focused on organizational matters, such as departmentalization, the recruitment of an experienced teaching corps, and providing differentiated courses of study. There were, however, relatively few efforts to define precisely what constituted a “real” junior high school curriculum. Reformers were not eager to establish curricular standards, which sometimes made it difficult to distinguish junior highs from elementary- or secondary schools. At a 1926 meeting of “progressive thinking” junior high school experts at the National Education Association’s headquarters, it was resolved that “every state, county and large city must develop its own course of study.”⁸⁴ The North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools agreed: “It is evident that the junior high school movement is of too recent origin to secure marked agreement as to the best way for such a standardized agency as the North Central Association to exercise its directive influence.”⁸⁵ It was decided that local junior high school authorities should determine which curricular policies best fit their school’s needs. A similar conclusion was reached

⁸⁴ “Conference on the Junior High School,” *School and Society* 24 (October 2, 1926), 431.

⁸⁵ J.B. Edmunson, “Standardization of the Junior High School,” *School and Society* 16 (September 9, 1922), 273.

by the NEA's Department of Superintendence after conducting a thorough study of junior high schools across the nation: "It is not the function of this Committee to advocate any particular plan," the report stated and, instead, simply offered ideas and suggestions without being prescriptive.⁸⁶ Local schools, then, were left largely to their own devices and had to work out the nuances of their reforms without the benefit of strong, national leadership. As one superintendent noted, the junior high school was a reform with "no great committee report to guide it."⁸⁷ Likewise, there were no leading figures—the junior high school lacked a Charles Eliot or a Clarence Kingsley. As a result, the schools varied according to context, sometimes assuming widely different forms within the same district. As Larry Cuban has written, the junior high school "was established to achieve a potpourri of goals" and, as a result, had a rather "blurred mission."⁸⁸

The history of junior high school development between 1910 and 1925 was a period of experimentation and discovery, a time when local reformers hashed out plans and attempted to institutionalize a fuzzy and somewhat puzzling vision commonly referred to as "the junior high school idea." It was a trial run, and schoolmen were aware that curricular standardization, before the lessons of experimentation could be learned, could be detrimental to the health of the burgeoning institution. In Detroit the superintendent acknowledged that much work remained to be done and that the schools were still in their infancy: "The course of study for these schools," he wrote, "is being worked out gradually...[and] it hardly seems the proper time at this stage to have these

⁸⁶ *The Junior High School Curriculum*, 217.

⁸⁷ *Report of the Board of Education, Lawrence, Kansas, For the Period, July 1920-August, 1924* (1924), 16.

⁸⁸ Cuban, "What Happens to Reforms that Last?" 235-236.

courses of study printed.”⁸⁹ R.G. Kinhead, Columbus, Ohio’s, Assistant Superintendent, called the junior high school an “experiment”; in Chicago it was noted that early junior high schools were undergoing a “trial”; and the first plan for Duluth, Minnesota’s, new schools was called a “tentative scheme,” likely to be revised at a later date.⁹⁰

For some, this openness and fluidity in design appeared to have been too much. The superintendent at Evansville, Indiana, thought the degree of variegation too high within his very own district:

Up to this time every building was, in many respects, a law unto itself. The work of the schools progressed according to the ideas of the teaching force of that particular building. It was not an uncommon occurrence that by the third month of school there was such a difference in the scope of the work that children transferred from one building to another frequently failed to make their promotion.⁹¹

In Grand Rapids, Paul Stetson, principal of the South High School (which contained a junior high department), complained that the system’s administrative mechanisms had not kept pace with the new institutional developments: “The principal’s day school summary gives no indication that such a thing as the junior high school is known in Grand Rapids.”⁹² And five years after the establishment of the first junior high school in Grand Rapids it was apparent that the intermediate curriculum had still not been sufficiently reorganized. A survey of that system’s schools, published in 1916, noted that the project was far from complete:

⁸⁹ *The Seventy-First Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Detroit for the Year Ending June 30th, 1914* (1914), 172.

⁹⁰ *Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Columbus for the School Year Ending August 31st, 1910* (1910), 128; *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, Chicago, Illinois, for the Year Ending June 30, 1924* (1924), 23; *Annual Report of the Board of Education, Independent School District of the City of Duluth, Minnesota, for the Year Ending 07/31/1917* (1917), 10.

⁹¹ *Report of the Public Schools of Evansville, Indiana for 1919 and 1920* (1920), 41.

⁹² Paul C. Stetson, “South High School,” *Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, School Year Ending 1918* (1918), 44.

many old-time traditional forms and practices (some of which are educationally questionable, others of which are educationally obsolete) are holding tenaciously in administrative procedure. What is distinctively needed, therefore, in the junior high-school work in Grand Rapids, is an effort to *carry through* to completion the reforms that have already been so well begun.⁹³

The junior high school movement contained a contradiction: on the one hand, reformers complained that reorganization rarely measured up to the rigorous standards on which “junior high school idea” was built. But, at the same time, they resisted efforts that would have standardized the institution. The problem was caused by the fact that reformers held allegiance to two different groups: adolescents and local business interests. If the primary goal of the junior high had been to organize schools in ways that catered to the distinct “nature” and “needs” of adolescence, then curricular standardization would have been uncontroversial. Adolescence, in Hall’s view at least, was a definite developmental stage that all young people experienced similarly—the adolescent condition did not vary from place to place because recapitulation was not dependent on geographic location. And even though recapitulatory thinking did not influence junior high school reformers, its collapse did not necessarily lead to the demise of the idea that adolescence was a distinct developmental stage requiring a special kind of education. But junior high school reformers ignored developmental and psychological theories altogether. Adolescent “interest” was not determined by an adolescent state of mind, but by the surrounding social and economic concerns of the community at large. And because those concerns varied with the locale, the adolescent curriculum could not be standardized.

⁹³ Grand Rapids, Michigan. Board of Education, *School Survey, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1916* (1916), 229-30. Original emphasis.

Throughout the country, then, the junior high was tied directly to the needs of a particular region, and not to adolescent developmental needs. This motive ensured that junior high schools would be as diverse as the communities they served. Lafayette Bloom in Cincinnati was a terminal, highly vocationalized K-10 institution that catered to a working class neighborhood and was modeled after German industrial schools. “The fact that this is an industrial center,” wrote Thomas Briggs, “and that about eighty percent of these pupils take either industrial arts or household arts shows [sic] the practical adaptation of the curriculum to the local environment.” It was an “institution with a single aim.”⁹⁴ In contrast to Bloom, St. Louis’ Ben Blewett Intermediate School was an independent three-year junior high (grades 7-9) that focused on academic work and anticipated that its students would matriculate at the neighboring high school. Blewett’s students, predictably, were “mainly from well-to-do families, only 15 per cent of them of foreign born parents.”⁹⁵ Bloom and Blewett could not have been more different, even though both were founded on the idea that junior high schools should be based on the nature, needs, and interests of adolescents. But, again, education for adolescents was to be determined by community needs, not by psychological theories. According to the theory of recapitulation, adolescent “interests” were determined by racial history, but the conclusions reached by junior high reformers were no less scripted: adolescent interest was dependent on the interests of the community. In neither case were individuals’ interests and aspirations truly taken into consideration.

⁹⁴ Briggs, *The Junior High School*, 40.

⁹⁵ R.L. Lyman, “The Ben Blewett Junior High School, St. Louis, MO.,” in R.L. Lyman and P.W.L. Cox, eds., *Junior High School Practices: A Collection of Articles Dealing With the Junior High School* (New York: Laidlaw Brothers, 1925), 70.

One of the reasons that national agencies were unprepared to recommend a standardized curriculum, then, had to do with the nature of the new institution, which sought to meet the varying social and economic needs of neighborhoods and school districts. Institutional flexibility allowed the junior high to adapt to those needs and, rather than having a single blueprint to guide their work, junior high school reformers had access to a dizzying array of models. As one writer put it, “Each Junior High school, so far, has been developed largely out of the needs of the locality, rather than of conformity to a state or national standard, with the result that each school has developed some feature or other which could be of use or enlightenment to others throughout the nation.”⁹⁶ Such a rationale, combining utilitarianism and localism, was not easily standardized. Consequently, “the” junior high school did not come into being in the first two decades of its existence, and it did not adhere to any ideal form. Curricula, administrative procedures, building plans, organizational schemes, and teaching corps differed widely from city to city. About the only commonality shared by all junior high schools was an understanding of adolescence that tied the young person’s needs and interests to those of his immediate surroundings:

The seventh grade is the natural turning point in the child’s school life, since at the age of adolescence he is eager to explore and discover those personal interests and limitations which point toward specific types of training and life work. The discipline, mode of instruction, and even the theory of class administration—as well as the traditional activities and studies of the old type school—failed to meet the mental, emotional, and vocational demands of the adolescent. The junior high school is the new school designed to meet these demands.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ S. O. Rorem, “Measuring East Junior High School of Sioux City, Iowa,” *School Review* 27 (January 1919), 44.

⁹⁷ NEA, “Creating a Curriculum for Adolescent Youth,” 5.

As we shall see, it was an understanding of adolescence that Hall would have considered to be misguided and shortsighted.

III. *Adolescence Reversed*

As already suggested, the incorporation of the junior high school into school districts in the 1910s and 1920s was closely tied to the economic interests of business-oriented reformers. The junior high school, writes one historian, “was one of the first parts of the academic ladder to succumb to the onslaught of the practical, progressive, business dominated reformer.”⁹⁸ Thus, its curriculum was developed not with theories of adolescent development in mind, but with the aim of preparing distinct types of workers. As one reformer wrote, the junior high school’s curriculum should mirror the economic needs of the communities it served:

An important factor to be reckoned with in the differentiation of the course of study is the type of the community. *It should be reflected in it.* If it is an agricultural community, the vocational work should be agricultural. If it is a commercial community, commercial subjects and vocational work in keeping with the activities of the community should be included. If it is a residential community of old-line families where almost all of the children go to college, the languages and algebra should be introduced in either the seventh or the eighth year.⁹⁹

Detroit’s first junior high schools “greatly emphasized manual and industrial training in the upper grades,” enabling “all of our upper grade children who desire industrial or pre-vocational training to secure such training at the public expense at centers not too distant

⁹⁸ Stephens, “The Junior High School, A Product of Reform Values,” 58.

⁹⁹ J. Murray Foster, “The Junior High School in Villages,” *Education* 37 (April 1917), 497.

from their homes.”¹⁰⁰ The reorganization of Detroit’s schools placed a premium on developing a curriculum that would fit its graduates for the roles that they would eventually play in the city’s economy:

We should not be satisfied with the school organization of Detroit until it is possible to offer all of our children the training that their probable future activity seems to demand. This will involve not merely the extension of junior technical high schools, as they may be called, but similar schools for those who are going into commercial or clerical pursuits. It is not sufficient to offer the specialized training merely to pupils in the high schools. Our industrial and commercial ranks are continually being recruited from those who are unable to take advantage of the educational opportunities afforded by our high schools.¹⁰¹

It was not infrequent for reformers to envision the junior high school as a terminal institution, and though the ideal was to guide the majority of its students on to the high school, educators knew that many youth would choose instead to enter the trades. In Columbus, Ohio, the president of the school board observed that Indianola Junior High School would be the final stop for many of the city’s students: “The fact that so many leave school should be recognized as an existing fact and a stopping place fixed there, a definite school course created that would end at that natural point, closing their school life with a diploma that certifies that they have completed a school course and honorably attained a definite educational aim.”¹⁰² Junior high schoolers in Kansas City, Kansas, were also aware that a number of their students would leave school upon the completion of the ninth grade and, consequently, sought to design practical curricular tracks to prepare those students for future employment:

Many of the girls who must drop out of school at the age of sixteen elect typewriting throughout the eighth and ninth grades and specialize during the

¹⁰⁰ *Seventieth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Detroit, For the Year Ending 06/30/1913* (1913), 68.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Columbus for the School Year Ending August 31st, 1909* (1909), 28-29.

ninth grade in stenography and office practice. For both boys and girls are offered survey courses in the seventh grade, gradually increasing specialization in the eighth grade, and a full year of work in one or two special lines during the ninth grade.¹⁰³

The school system of Duluth, Minnesota, also designed its junior high school curriculum with the city's economic interests in mind, and shaped the schools' offerings around the vocational opportunities that students could expect to find upon completion of the intermediate grades. In Duluth, 42 percent of students leaving school joined the city's manufactures, 21 percent embarked upon clerical careers, 16 percent found work in transportation, 7 percent in agriculture, 6 percent in domestic work, with only about 3 percent gaining employment in the professional occupations. Having outlined the opportunities that Duluth students were likely to encounter, the junior high school tailored its curriculum to provide training for those fields: "While it is not true that all the occupations can find a place in the school curriculum, the figures indicate to some extent what should be taught in the public schools in order that children can have some experience as a basis for determining the proper occupation for them to enter when they leave school."¹⁰⁴

These local districts seem to have followed the advice coming from national educational organizations. The NEA, in its 1923 publication, "Creating A Curriculum for Adolescent Youth," was firm in its recommendation that the junior high school curriculum should be informed by the employment needs of local businesses. The report suggested that school systems conduct a "community survey of the economic, social, and industrial conditions to determine what courses in industrial arts should be given." Also

¹⁰³ R.L. Lyman, "The Junior High Schools of Kansas City, Kansas," *School Review* 36 (March 1928), 188-189.

¹⁰⁴ *Annual Report of the Board of Education, Independent School District of the City of Duluth, Minnesota, for the Year Ending 07/31/17 (1917)*, 9.

recommended was the formation of a “local advisory committee to work with the school people in formulating courses in industrial arts.”¹⁰⁵ The report also made suggestions concerning the education of adolescent girls, noting that programs of domestic science should vary according to local needs. Rural girls were more likely to make their own clothing than were urban girls; they also cooked more and played a greater role in caring for their family’s children. Thus, in the junior high school, efforts should be made “to meet individual and community needs through home economics courses.”¹⁰⁶

The junior high school curriculum, while heavily focused on the future occupational pursuits of its students, was not vocational in the strictest sense. And though some students were offered highly specialized terminal courses, the junior high was conceived as “essentially an exploratory, try-out, and information school.”¹⁰⁷ The intermediate grades were to be a period of “exploration” and “guidance,” where students were provided with opportunities to “try out” as many different vocational subjects as possible. Once students gained familiarity with the many career choices available to them, and had the chance to find what line of work most suited their own talents, they would be able to make informed decisions when they entered high school and were compelled to choose a specialized curricular track.

Reformers were always careful to note that the junior high school “offers general rather than specific vocational education, it tests out aptitudes and looks to different futures for different children.”¹⁰⁸ It was sometimes a disingenuous claim, but the discovery of individual differences became one of the official primary aims of the junior

¹⁰⁵ NEA, “Creating a Curriculum for Adolescent Youth,” 47,

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

high school. A survey conducted by Leonard V. Koos in 1919-20 found that the majority of junior high school workers considered “recognizing individual differences” to be the most important function of the institution.¹⁰⁹ In uncovering the differences of its students, the junior high school sought to tailor the course of instruction according to the student’s “interests” or “needs.” Those interests and differences, however, were generally limited to ideas about one’s future occupation. According to one observer, the junior high school should offer

differentiated courses of study for pupils according to their interests, capacities and probable future careers. The junior high school will be organized for two general groups of pupils, namely, those who are going to continue their school training for some time, and those who are likely to discontinue their school work at an early age. Those who are to continue their school work through the high school will be prepared in the junior high school to do that. Those who are to leave school early will be better prepared to take up some gainful occupation than are most pupils who now leave the upper grades or the early years of the high school.¹¹⁰

Reformers were convinced that curricular differentiation based on a student’s likely professional role introduced into the modern school system a highly democratic practice. In their opinion, nothing was more undemocratic than providing students of differing interests and abilities with a uniform curriculum. Disagreeing with the Committee of Ten, junior high school reformers thought that forcing all students into academic classes was inequitable—the school should instead adapt itself the specific needs of each of its students. The superintendent of Grand Rapids, Michigan, explained that sorting students based on abilities and “interests” was a noble example of democracy in action:

The ideal of our public school educational system should be to furnish every boy and girl in Grand Rapids with the opportunity to become a good, useful, patriotic, and self-supporting citizen, to develop the greatest possible extent their natural powers and capabilities. This cannot be done by assuming that all men are

¹⁰⁹ Koos, “The Peculiar Functions of the Junior High School,” 678.

¹¹⁰ Cardozo, “The Junior High School—Its Origin and Trend,” 599-600.

created equal. All men are not created equal in powers and capabilities. Children differ in mental alertness, in moral responsibility, in mental aptitudes, tastes and tendencies, in environment, in vocational aims, in intellectual endowments, in physical development...No one who knows the modern trend of thought tries any longer to put all the children in the public schools through the same mill.¹¹¹

A “democratic education,” as conceived by junior high school reformers and influenced by the logic of social efficiency, lay not in providing all adolescents with a common educational experience, but in giving them the opportunity to discover their own talents and interests and by allowing them to pursue a course of instruction that best fit their own, individual needs. “We must explore the interests, the aptitudes, and the capacities of the pupil,” wrote Thomas Briggs. “We must at the same time reveal to him the possibilities in various fields of education, so that, even while profiting by the thoroughly worth while material presented to him, he may intelligently determine his future training.”¹¹²

Junior high school reformers were not informed by psychological theories concerning adolescent development, and they were certainly not influenced by Hall’s complicated recapitulatory arguments. There was a clear disconnect between Hall’s era, when the child study movement was at its height and when the theory of recapitulation was commonly accepted, and the junior high school period, when social efficiency concerns dominated educational discussions and when the focus of adolescent development was almost entirely vocational. The junior high schoolers conceived of adolescence in simple terms, understanding it as a period in life when one’s individuality emerged. Whereas elementary school children did not vary widely in interests and

¹¹¹ *Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, School Year Ending July 1, 1910* (1910), 29-30.

¹¹² Briggs, “Possibilities of the Junior High School,” 279.

abilities, adolescence was a period when differences became more marked. It was, therefore, appropriate for the primary grades to offer its students a common curriculum, ensuring that all learned the same basic set of skills. At adolescence the educational needs of the student changed; as one reformer noted, “Up to a certain age, pupils may very satisfactorily be grouped together and given the same general work. But when the boys and girls reach the age of adolescence, their individuality begins to assert itself; faintly, perhaps, and sometimes under our rigid systems in ways hardly apparent, but real, nevertheless.”¹¹³ Leonard V. Koos observed that there was an “expanding range of variation as we proceed from grade to grade.”¹¹⁴ Reformers linked the onset of adolescence, and the assertion of individuality that accompanied it, with specific educational needs:

The Junior High School takes these vital changes of the adolescent into consideration, by its differentiation and selection of courses which appeal to the adolescent youth. It takes account of the “nature and upheaval at the dawn of the teens which makes the pubescent ferment.” The vocational subjects, commercial subjects, agricultural subjects and the like, offered by the curriculum of the Junior High School cater to this transformation period through which the adolescent is passing.¹¹⁵

G. Stanley Hall proposed many of the curricular changes advocated by junior high school reformers—he embraced the idea of curricular differentiation, wanted secondary schools to cater to the adolescent’s interests, and was highly critical of the recommendations made by Eliot’s Committee of Ten. The report, a “masterpiece of college policy,” was based on a flawed premise, one that both the child study- and junior high school movements sought to undermine: “every subject which is taught at all in a secondary school should be taught in the same way and to the same extent to every pupil

¹¹³ Stetson, “The Junior High School,” 31.

¹¹⁴ Koos, *The Junior High School*, 41.

¹¹⁵ Abelson, “A Study of the Junior High School Project,” 11.

so long as he pursues it, no matter what the probable destination of the pupil may be or at what point his education is to cease.”¹¹⁶ The Committee’s logic was, to Hall, undemocratic and based on faulty psychology. Laying the groundwork for an argument that would fuel the building of junior high schools, Hall noted, “To refuse this concession to the wide range of individual differences is a specious delusion, which in a democracy may be perfectly honest.”¹¹⁷ Hall chided the Committee for ignoring “the fact that there are as great differences in natural ability as those artificially created in any aristocracy, and that the very life of a republic depends on bringing these out.”¹¹⁸ And, again foreshadowing the arguments made by junior high school reformers, Hall noted that adolescence was the period of life when individual differences became most pronounced—during puberty, “individual differences of all kinds are now suddenly augmented. The interval between the strong and weak, the dull and bright, beautiful and ugly, becomes far greater than it was before.”¹¹⁹ If the needs of the modern school’s heterogeneous population were to be met, it would have to offer numerous curricular tracks, allowing students to follow courses of study that appealed to individual interest that took into consideration varying degrees of ability: “Progress is now in differentiation,” wrote Hall. “The more parallel courses, electives, groups and institutions the better, provided only they are good and thorough, and really distinct and individual.”¹²⁰

As Joseph Kett has shown, *Adolescence* contained many contradictions, and nowhere are Hall’s inconsistencies more pronounced than when he dealt with the issue of

¹¹⁶ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 510.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 514.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 363.

¹²⁰ G. Stanley Hall, “Editorial,” *Pedagogical Seminary* 1 (No. 2, 1891), 121.

reforming adolescent education. At times he seemed comfortable with the aims of social efficiency and offered future junior high school reformers arguments that would have supported their vocational mission:

Agriculture, manufacture, and commerce are the bases of national prosperity, and on them all professions, institutions, and even culture, are more and more dependent, while the old ideals of mere study and brain-work are fast becoming obsolete...Those who leave school at any age should be best fitted to take up their life work instead of leaving unfitted for it, aimless and discouraged.¹²¹

Manual training programs were capable of meeting “the growing demand of the country for a more practical education,” and Hall considered it a great “pedagogic problem” to provide some form of training for the several hundred vocational opportunities available to young people, more than half of which involved “manual work.”¹²² At the same time, however, Hall wrote that “the high school should primarily fit for nothing, but should exploit and develop to the uttermost all the powers, for this alone is a liberal education.”¹²³ Vocational curricula were oftentimes narrow in scope and limited the student’s aspirations: “Academic enervation and anemia is seen when youth desire simply to fit for ready-made positions instead of striking out new ones.”¹²⁴ An education that fit students only for present occupational opportunities was shortsighted: “Nor should [education] be content to fit for the present, which will all too soon be an emeritus deity.”¹²⁵

Hall was clearly conflicted, but the problem of vocational education was not a central concern in *Adolescence*. Nor did junior high school reformers cite Hall as an

¹²¹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 1, 173.

¹²² Ibid., 174-175.

¹²³ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 525.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 513.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 514.

authority who lent support to their argument for vocational education—in fact, Hall would have detested many of their proposals. Educational historian Herbert Kliebard, in his history of vocational education, demonstrates that the vocational rationale was diametrically opposed to the educational program set forth in *Adolescence*.

Besides vocationalism, however, the new industrial order gave rise to another powerful ideology, social efficiency. At certain significant points, social efficiency and vocationalism obviously converge. Both doctrines, for example, accept at least implicitly, but more often explicitly, the notion that education is above all a process of getting ready for adulthood.¹²⁶

Junior high schools modeled the adult world and sought, above all else, to prepare children for entrance into the workforce. The student who completed the junior high school course, wrote one reformer, “will have attained at least sufficient training from the course pursued with which to enter the ranks of the industrial, commercial or agricultural world, and will have a pretty good idea of what will be expected of him in life.”¹²⁷ Clearly, the “interests” reflected in the junior high school curriculum were not necessarily those of its students but, rather, the interests of adults and, particularly, business-oriented adults whose livelihood depended on a reliable supply of trained employees. And though the mantra of individual interest invoked by junior high school reformers sounded Hallian, it was little more than an attempt to render the efforts of commercial and industrial interests to appear consistent with liberal and democratic values.

For Hall, adolescents developmentally predated the modern, industrial world. Thus, from a recapitulatory perspective, it would have been impossible for adolescents to find much interest in it. Furthermore, since all adolescents occupied the same evolutionary moment, it made little sense to link the intermediate curriculum to a

¹²⁶ Kliebard, *Schooled to Work*, 120.

¹²⁷ Abelson, “A Study of the Junior High School Project,” 9.

particular community's economic exigencies. A "junior high school in the heart of an industrial district will need a curriculum somewhat different from the curriculum of a school in a district exclusively residential," wrote one reformer.¹²⁸ In so thinking, junior high school reformers ignored one of the primary lessons of *Adolescence*: modern adolescents, like primitives in the colonies, were mentally and emotionally unequipped to deal with the modern world and, thus, needed to be sheltered from it. Hall's ideal school was a refuge, but the junior high school was hardly a sanctuary. Hall's educational vision required schools to embrace childhood without rushing them towards adulthood, so "the child can enter upon his full heritage, live out each stage of his life to the fullest, and realize in himself all its manifold tendencies."¹²⁹ But modern schools, which placed an undue amount of importance on the student's future occupational role, forced "young people [to] leap rather than grow into maturity."¹³⁰ As Hall noted, in the bustle of modern, civilized life, young people were being left behind:

We are conquering nature, achieving a magnificent material civilization, leading the world in the applications though not in the creation of science, coming to lead in energy and intense industrial and other activities; our vast and complex business organization that has long since outgrown the comprehension of professional economists, absorbs ever more and earlier the best talent and muscle of youth and now dominates health, time, society, politics, and law-giving, and sets new and ever more pervading fashions in manners, morals, education, and religion; but we are progressively forgetting that for the complete apprenticeship to life, youth needs repose, leisure, art, legends, romance, idealization, and in a word humanism, if it is to enter the kingdom of man well equipped for man's highest work in the world.¹³¹

The junior high school's curriculum was not nearly as broad as Hall would have liked—he would have found its focus on occupational interests to be extremely narrow

¹²⁸ R.L. Lyman, "The Junior High Schools of Chicago," *School Review* 32 (December 1924), 737-738.

¹²⁹ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, xi.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, xvi.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.

and unnatural, which was the most egregious offence an educator could commit. In Hall's mind, the "educational ideal is now to develop capacities in as many directions as possible, to indulge caprice and velleity a little, to delay consistency for a time, and let the diverse prepotencies struggle with each other."¹³² The ideal of the junior high school that eventually emerged, however, was antithetical to the educational plan found in *Adolescence*, and vocational training took precedence over the developmentally based curriculum outlined by Hall. In the early years of the junior high school movement, only traces of Hall remained, appearing in the reformer's "interest"-based rhetoric. In reality, however, vocational subjects dominated the curriculum: in 1918, manual training and domestic science could be "found in approximately three-fourths of the schools."¹³³ "Interest" was linked to the needs of local businesses; the curriculum was crafted without a clear picture of adolescence; and a teaching corps that had received no training on the special nature of their students delivered the content. Sadly, Hall's goal of protecting modern youth from the narrowly conceived concerns of the modern world had gone unrealized. And though the child study movement had demonstrated great promise in getting the school to adapt itself to the needs of students, in the end, students were forced to adapt to the needs to the school. Hall's program had been reversed.

Conclusion

Toward the end of *Adolescence*, when considering the problem of race pedagogy, G. Stanley Hall wrote, "The Indian has been sympathetically studied far longer than has

¹³² Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 89.

¹³³ C.O. Davis, "Junior High Schools in the North Central Association Territory," *School Review* 26 (April 1918), 333.

childhood and youth, but this rich body of knowledge remains unused.”¹³⁴ The same was true of educational schemes developed for adolescents—lessons learned from decades of child study had been forgotten by reformers who sought to redefine the mission of schools. The disconnect between anthropological study and Indian educational policy had resulted in “special schools” for Indian youth that were “very inadequate and sometimes as wrong as they are well meant.”¹³⁵ Too much stress was placed on fitting the Indian for the modern world—“The present Superintendent of Indian Schools advocates compulsory education of all Indian children, especially industrially.”¹³⁶ The same happened with the junior high school: a disconnect between theory and practice resulted in schools that focused solely on preparing the adolescent for his or her place in the modern world. Forcing the white man’s civilization upon Native Americans had proven extremely detrimental, especially when they were compelled to take up his vocations: “It is somber and pitiful to isolate a Sioux tribesman to the lonely life of a poor Western rancher,” which was precisely what America’s reservation policy was doing. And Indian educational policies, rather than trying to educate natives in ways that appealed to their own nature and culture, were attempting to remake the Indian child into something that he was not. “We have robbed the Indians, but never so wrongly as forcing their children from their homes without parental consent to imprison them in a remote school, which should be brought to them and not they to it.”¹³⁷ In linking adolescents with primitive groups, the experiences of both could be understood in like terms: schools were weapons, used to create subservient and pliable workers for the modern economy. Hall argued that

¹³⁴ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 700.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 694.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 696.

the practice of doing so in the colonial world was injurious to native populations, but the warnings were unheeded, and the junior high school, though not informed by colonial policy, did conceive of education in equally narrow terms. As Hall noted, “The world goes to school. This has become the method of colonization and completes the work of conquest by armies.”¹³⁸

Education was too important to be left to the caprice of policy makers, and in the case of the schooling of Indians, Hall had this to say:

At root the “Indian question” can not be solved by Congress, the army, the clergy, *or the pedagogue*. It lies mostly beyond the ken of the historian. The only real authority in the field is the ethnologist who has lived with the Indian as he lives, won his confidence and taken his point of view and read the literature about him.¹³⁹

The same argument was made for the education of Western children: adolescents were far too valuable to leave their fate in the hands of myopic efficiency educators and self-interested business leaders. It was preferable for highly educated experts to be in charge of setting educational policy and, like Hall, they should regard adolescence as “the most fascinating of all themes, more worthy, perhaps, than anything else in the world of reverence, most inviting study, and in most crying need of a service we do not yet understand how to render aright.”¹⁴⁰ But rarely were sentiments like those expressed in the junior high school literature and, sadly, the new educational programs for adolescents, like those designed for Indian children, had just about everything backwards:

In education our very kindergartens, which outnumber those of any other land, by dogma and hyper-sophistication *tend to exterminate the naïve that is the glory of childhood*. Everywhere the mechanical and formal triumph over content and substance, the letter over the spirit, the intellect over morals, lesson setting and

¹³⁸ Ibid., 494.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 699-700. My emphasis.

¹⁴⁰ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. I, xviii.

hearing over real teaching, the technical over the essential, information over education, marks over edification, and method over matter.¹⁴¹

Did Hall's conflation of adolescence and savagery have unintended consequences? Were adolescents, in the end, "colonized" and treated like "savages," valued only for their potential economic contributions? It is difficult to say—the evidence of a direct connection between Hall's adolescent-as-savage thesis and the junior high school's campaign to segregate and vocationalize young people is lacking. But troubling similarities abound, and if we are to use Hall's ideas in our analysis then the parallels are clearly present.

Joseph Kett has observed that founding ideas and institutional practices are sometimes separated over the course of time, leaving institutional arrangements in place that are detached from the ideas that initially created them:

But no sooner had [reformers] all converged than they parted company, going off in separate directions and to new interests. They left young people holding the bag, so to speak, for the institutions created in the early 20th century survived to become an enduring form of custody for youth, long after the ideas and impulses which created them were laid to rest.¹⁴²

Kett's comment is valuable, but not original. Edward B. Tylor and Herbert Spencer made the same point: man is the product of his ancestors and, even if that legacy has been forgotten, their practices often remain with us. Rediscovering that heritage, which had been lost over the ages, had been the aim of many nineteenth-century thinkers, including John Fiske, John Lubbock, Ernst Haeckel, Thomas H. Huxley, Cesare Lombroso, Havelock Ellis, Henry Maudsley, and, of course, G. Stanley Hall. It has also been the aim

¹⁴¹ Ibid., xvii. My emphasis.

¹⁴² Kett, *Rites of Passage*, 217.

of this work, influenced by the very book that it set out to understand. The great lesson to be learned, sought by evolutionists and recapitulationists alike, was stated innumerable times in the pages of *Adolescence*, and sometimes quite beautifully: “we are influenced in our deeper, more temperamental dispositions by the life-habits and codes of conduct of we know not what unnumbered hosts of ancestors, which like a cloud of witnesses are present throughout our lives, and that our souls are echo-chambers in which their whispers reverberate.”¹⁴³ G. Stanley Hall had noble aims but, in the end, his work was built atop a problematic science. In conflating adolescents and savages, Hall had intended to liberate both, but *Adolescence* was never able to emerge from the context in which it was written and, as a result, the child-as-savage metaphor became derogatory, demeaning, and, perhaps, embedded in our culture’s understanding of children. Historians of childhood and education may have forgotten that adolescence was built upon the foundations of racism, imperialism, and conquest, but that is not to say that the legacy does not linger.

¹⁴³ Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 61.

Curriculum Vitae

Joshua Garrison, PhD
PO Box 13 – Clarksville, MO – 63336
573.242.9676
mfgarris@gmail.com

Education:

Ph.D., Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington,
Indiana (2006)
M.S., History and Philosophy of Education, Indiana University (1999)
B.A., History, Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington (1997)

Professional Experience:

August 2006-	Assistant Professor, Dept. of Educational Foundations, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appointment begins August 2006
2002-2005	Associate Instructor, School of Education, Indiana University
2003-2005	Unite Director, Camp Nebagamon, Lake Nebagamon, WI
2001-2004	Graduate Assistant to Donald Warren, Indiana University
1999-2001	Assistant Editor, Papers of George Santayana, I.U.—Indianapolis
1997-1999	Associate Instructor, School of Education, Indiana University

Courses Taught:

H340 Education and American Culture
H504 History of American Education

Conference Presentations:

2004 “Educational Historians as ‘Marginal Creatures’: A Self-Imposed Myth?” annual meeting of the History of Education Society, Kansas City, Missouri

2003 “G. Stanley Hall’s Colonial Legacy: *Adolescence*, Anthropology, and the Postcolonial,” annual meeting of the History of Education Society, Evanston, Illinois

2002 “Professional and Institutional Reconceptualizations: The Early History of Junior High School Teachers in the Midwest, 1910-1925,” annual meeting of the History of Education Society, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

2002 “The Uneasy Origins of the Junior High School Curriculum, 1910-1930,” annual meeting of the Midwest History of Education Society, Chicago, Illinois